

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
GAINESVILLE DIVISION**

STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA,

Plaintiff,

v.

Case No. 1:23cv281-MW/HTC

RAYMOND RODRIGUES, *et al.*,

Defendants.

**THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND CHANCELLOR
RODRIGUES' RESPONSE IN OPPOSITION TO
PLAINTIFF'S MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

Defendants, the Chancellor of the State University System of Florida and members of the Florida Board of Governors,¹ respectfully respond to Plaintiff's Motion for Preliminary Injunction (ECF Nos. 38, 39).

¹ Unless separately discussed, references to the Board or Board of Governors include the Chancellor, who serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Board of Governors. Also, as noted in Governor DeSantis' Motion to Dismiss, the Governor joins in this Response because the arguments applicable to the Board and Chancellor apply to the Governor as well.

INTRODUCTION

The events that led us here cannot be overstated. On October 7, 2023, Hamas—a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization—committed unfathomable acts of savagery against innocent men, women, children, and babies in Israel.² Some of the victims were American citizens.³ Coined “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood,” Hamas carried out these acts on a Jewish holiday.⁴

“[M]ore than 1,500 members of Hamas’ death squads purged Israeli villages—killing over 1,400 people, injuring thousands of others, taking at least 200 hostages, and leaving behind a trail of unspeakable horror.” Comm. on Foreign Affairs Memo at 2. The carnage perpetrated by Hamas included:

- Murdering civilians in their cars, including women, children, and entire families;
- Assaulting kibbutzim, killing residents and burning homes;
- Holding captive and massacring families in their homes;
- Forcing hostages to lure other civilians out of their homes;

² Letter from Rep. McCaul to Dep’t of State Sec’y Blinken & Amb. Van Schaack, at 1 (Oct. 19, 2023), *available at* <https://mccaul.house.gov/sites/evo-sub-sites/mccaul.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2023-10-19-letter-to-sec.-blinken-amb.-van-schaack-regarding-hamas-genocide-crimes-against-humanity-war-crimes.pdf> (“Comm. on Foreign Affairs Memo”).

³ Ex. 39, *also available at* <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/11/us/israel-americans-missing-killed-hostage.html>.

⁴ *Israel and Hama October 2023 Conflict: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*, Congressional Research Service (CRS Report 47754), at 1, Oct. 20, 2023, V.10 Updated, *available at* <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47754>.

- Executing babies and children in their beds and carseats;
- Murdering the elderly and posting the evidence on the social media;
- Slaughtering more than 250 civilians attending a music festival at point-blank range;
- Capturing and raping women;
- Kidnapping children;
- Parading and spitting on the dead in the streets;
- Mutilating the bodies of victims; and
- Burning men, women, and children alive.

Comm. on Foreign Affairs Memo, at 2–3. This mass atrocity has been described as the “deadliest attack against the Jewish people in a single day ‘since the Holocaust.’”⁵

In the wake of these horrific attacks, antisemitic incidents in the United States have climbed sharply—by as much as 388%. *See United States v. Burke*, No. 19 CR 322, 2023 WL 7110745, at *5 (N.D. Ill. Oct. 28, 2023); *see also Oversight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation: Before S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 118th Cong. (2023) (testimony of FBI Director Christopher Wray), *available at* <https://www.ju->

⁵ Ex. 40, *also available at* <https://www.timesofisrael.com/why-a-holocaust-scholar-thinks-comparisons-with-the-oct-7-hamas-massacre-are-valid/>.

diciary.senate.gov/committee-activity/hearings/12/05/2023/oversight-of-the-federal-bureau-of-investigation, at 1:13:30 (noting a “388% rise in the anti-Semitic incidents since this time last year”). In the words of FBI Director Christopher Wray: “it is a real problem.” *Id.* at 2:43:33 (“We’ve seen bomb threats to synagogues, threats to attack the Jewish community on campuses and other places. We’ve had multiple arrests.”). Because the Jewish community shoulders a disproportionate share of hate crimes, the FBI is “acutely focused on the threats to the Jewish community, which very much needs our help.” *Id.* at 2:44:20. This alarming trend is felt in Florida, which is home to the third largest Jewish population in the nation.⁶

College and university campuses are not immune from this striking rise in antisemitism, which has drawn national attention from the press and Congress. *E.g.*, *Condemning Antisemitism on Univ. Campuses and the Testimony of Univ. Presidents in the House Comm. on Educ. and the Workforce*, H.R. 927, 118th Cong. (2023), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-resolution/927/actions>; Ex. 32.⁷

⁶ Brandeis Steinhardt Social Research Institute, *American Jewish Population Estimates 2020 Summary and Highlights*, at 8 (Mar. 2021), available at <https://ajpp.brandeis.edu/documents/2020/JewishPopulationDataBrief2020.pdf>.

⁷ Also available at [available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/10/31/antisemitism-college-campuses-jewish-hamas-gaza/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/10/31/antisemitism-college-campuses-jewish-hamas-gaza/).

The Board of Governors is constitutionally charged with oversight and governance of the State University System. Art. IX § 7, Fla. Const. Public universities in Florida are in turn obligated to protect the welfare of all students—including Jewish students—and to strike the delicate balance between promoting students’ freedom of expression and association and preventing interference with the educational environment in the form of disruption, harassment, and of course illegal activities and violence. The Chancellor’s Memorandum respects that balance.

Against this backdrop, public officials in Florida were gravely concerned by the National Students for Justice in Palestine’s (“SJP”) dissemination of two “toolkits” embracing Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and encouraging disruptive—and sometimes outright illegal—tactics on the University of Florida (“UF”) and University of South Florida (“USF”) campuses. For the reasons discussed throughout, Chancellor Rodrigues’ Memorandum endorsing deactivation of Florida’s two SJP chapters—UF SJP and USF SJP—was a reasonable reaction that does not run afoul of the First Amendment. Plaintiff’s selective presentation of facts does not clearly establish a substantial likelihood of success on the merits.

Plaintiff’s Motion should be denied for additional threshold legal failures. Plaintiff is unlikely to succeed on the merits because Plaintiff lacks standing to sue the Board of Governors, including the Chancellor, and its claim is not ripe. Plaintiff seeks an injunction preventing deactivation but presents no evidence that it faces

imminent deactivation. And as to the Board, Plaintiff’s request leaves nothing for this Court to enjoin: the Chancellor’s Memorandum is not enforceable, and the Board cannot deactivate student groups. While the Board oversees and possesses general enforcement authority with respect to *universities*, it has no direct authority over the recognition, discipline, or deactivation of *student groups*.⁸ Universities serve those functions. An injunction prohibiting the Board of Governors from deactivating Plaintiff therefore enjoins the Board from doing what it cannot do.

For the same reasons, Plaintiff cannot show a likelihood of irreparable harm—as opposed to a nebulous fear of possible future actions. The public interest is not served by gratuitously enjoining the Board of Governors from acts it cannot take. Nor would the public interest be served—or any injury redressed—by an advisory injunction that admonishes the Board to follow the law and its regulations.

Plaintiff has not carried its burden to clearly establish a right to preliminary relief. This Court should deny the Motion.

LEGAL STANDARD

The grant of a preliminary injunction “is the exception rather than the rule, and plaintiff must clearly carry the burden of persuasion.” *United States v. Lambert*, 695 F.2d 536, 539 (11th Cir. 1983). “[A] preliminary injunction is an extraordinary and

⁸ The Board delegated to universities the authority to regulate matters related to student groups in Board of Governors Regulation 1.001(4).

drastic remedy.” *Siegel v. LePore*, 234 F.3d 1163, 1176 (11th Cir. 2000) (en banc). To prevail on a motion for preliminary injunction, a plaintiff must clearly establish that: “(1) it has a substantial likelihood of success on the merits; (2) irreparable injury will be suffered unless the injunction issues; (3) the threatened injury to the movant outweighs whatever damage the proposed injunction may cause the opposing party; and (4) if issued, the injunction would not be adverse to the public interest.” *Id.* “[W]here the government is the party opposing the preliminary injunction, its interest and harm merge with the public interest.” *Swain v. Junior*, 958 F.3d 1081, 1091 (11th Cir. 2020).

LEGAL ARGUMENT

I. PLAINTIFF IS UNLIKELY TO SUCCEED ON THE MERITS.

a. Plaintiff Lacks Standing Because the Chancellor’s Memorandum Is Unenforceable, and the Board of Governors’ General Enforcement Authority Does Not Reach Student Groups.

Plaintiff is unlikely to succeed on the merits because it lacks standing to sue the Board of Governors. Standing is an “indispensable” part of the preliminary-injunction analysis and is not a mere pleading requirement. *Shen v. Simpson*, No. 4:23-cv-00208-AW-MAF, 2023 WL 5517253, at *3 (N.D. Fla. Aug. 17, 2023). “A party who fails to show a ‘substantial likelihood’ of standing is not entitled to a preliminary injunction.” *Food & Water Watch, Inc. v. Vilsack*, 808 F.3d 905, 913 (D.C. Cir. 2015). Thus, like the merits of its claim, Plaintiff must clearly establish its Article III standing to obtain

preliminary relief. *Falls v. DeSantis*, 609 F. Supp. 3d 1273, 1281–82 (N.D. Fla. 2022). Plaintiff has not carried this weighty burden.

Plaintiff’s heavy reliance on *Healy v. James*, 408 U.S. 169 (1972), illustrates its lack of standing to sue the Board. In *Healy*, the plaintiff student group sued college officials with actual authority to recognize, or not recognize, student groups, and those officials in fact refused to recognize the plaintiff student group. *Id.* at 170–79. By contrast, the Board neither recognizes nor deactivates student groups; that role is filled by the universities. *Support Working Animals, Inc. v. Gov. of Fla.*, 8 F.4th 1198, 1201 (11th Cir. 2021) (citations omitted). (“[W]here, as here, a plaintiff has sued to enjoin a government official from enforcing a law, he must show, at the very least, that the official has the authority to enforce the particular provision that he has challenged, such that an injunction prohibiting enforcement would be effectual.”).⁹

And of course, Plaintiff has not been deactivated. These two critical distinctions illustrate that, unlike in *Healy*, Plaintiff in this case has not suffered a concrete injury that is traceable to the Board and redressable by an injunction against the Board.

i. Injury-In-Fact

Article III requires Plaintiff to show that it “suffered ‘an invasion of a legally protected interest’ that is ‘concrete and particularized’ and ‘actual or imminent, not

⁹ The Memorandum was directed only to Universities, inherently recognizing they are the body that has direct purview over the student organizations.

conjectural or hypothetical.” *Spokeo, Inc. v. Robins*, 578 U.S. 330, 339 (2016) (quoting *Lujan v. Defs. of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 560 (1992)). A “concrete injury” must be “real, and not abstract.” *Id.* (marks omitted).

Plaintiff has not been deactivated. The Chancellor and Board did not and could not deactivate Plaintiff. The Chancellor’s Memorandum is not formal Board action, has no independent legal effect, and cannot be enforced against Plaintiff. Plaintiff has not articulated an actual or imminent injury-in-fact. *See Digital Props., Inc. v. City of Plantation*, 121 F.3d 586, 590 (11th Cir. 1997) (“Without the presentation of a binding conclusive administrative decision, no tangible controversy exists and, thus, we have no authority to act.”).

Deactivation is the cornerstone of Plaintiff’s Complaint. But Plaintiff has not been deactivated by the University, nor has it pleaded or proved facts suggesting that deactivation or any other punishment—from anyone—is imminent. The Chancellor’s statements to the Board of Governors indicate the opposite: that the University has no imminent plan to deactivate. *See* <https://thefloridachannel.org/videos/11-9-23-florida-board-of-governors-meeting/> (Nov. 9, 2023 Bd. of Govs. Meeting at 2:31–2:34) (explaining that the University of Florida and University of South Florida expressed that they do not intend to deactivate their SJP chapters at this time) (“Nov. 9 Board Meeting Video”); ECF No. 1 ¶¶ 46–48 (quoting Chancellor Rodrigues’ comments and noting that “the universities have not deactivated their university chapters of SJP”).

Critically, Plaintiff has not clearly established that the Board of Governors could deactivate a student group. Rather, Plaintiff acknowledges the University is the entity with authority to deactivate it. ECF No. 1 ¶¶ 8, 16, 33–34, 53–56, 58. Plaintiff also acknowledges that University regulations set forth the process the University would afford to any student group, including Plaintiff, facing potential deactivation. *Id.* ¶¶ 33–34.¹⁰ The Chancellor’s Memorandum does not purport to dispense with these regulations. Plaintiff presents no evidence that these procedural protections would not apply, that the University has initiated deactivation in accordance with these regulations, or that the Board would play any role in these hypothetical processes. Instead, Plaintiff concedes that “Defendants [have not] provided [USF] SJP with due process rights” as set forth in the University’s regulations. *Id.* ¶ 35.¹¹ This lack of evidence demonstrates the prematurity and contingent nature of Plaintiff’s claim.

The Chancellor acknowledged at a public Board meeting that their immediate next step was to seek legal guidance to evaluate some of the positions espoused on behalf of the Universities, and to gather additional information regarding the student groups’ compliance with laws and policies. *See* Nov. 9 Board Meeting Video at

¹⁰ Relevant University policies are published on the University’s website: USF Student Code of Conduct (<https://usf.app.box.com/v/usfregulation60021>); USF Student Grievance Process (<https://usf.app.box.com/v/usfpolicy30-054>); USF Discrimination & Harassment Policy (<https://usf.app.box.com/v/usfpolicy0-007>).

¹¹ Of course, the University is the only Defendant that can or would initiate its own due-process regulations for its student organizations.

2:32:00. Neither the Chancellor nor the Board indicated an intent or plan to take any further actions in response. *See id.* at 2:28:00–2:33:53. These statements weigh against a finding that the Board could force deactivation and has plans to do so imminently. Rather, a reasonable listener would likely infer that the Board does not intend imminently to take further steps and that universities drive the deactivation decision. *See NFC Freedom, Inc. v. Diaz*, No. 4:23-cv-00360-MW/MAF, 2023 WL 7283920, at *8 (N.D. Fla. Nov. 3, 2023) (“Plaintiffs’ source for this quotation also permits a reasonable inference that Defendant Rufo *does not* intend to enforce the challenged provision”). With no allegations or proof of actual or imminent deactivation, Plaintiff has neither articulated nor proven a concrete injury.

To the extent Plaintiff asserts a chilling effect as its Article III injury, that injury is too speculative to confer standing and, as to the Board of Governors, is objectively unreasonable. While a chilling effect or self-censorship may sometimes constitute a cognizable First Amendment injury, it is not sufficient here because the “mere fear of unconstitutional action alone . . . is too speculative an injury to confer standing.” *Club Madonna, Inc. v. City of Miami Beach*, 924 F. 3d 1370, 1381–82 (11th Cir. 2019). “Allegations of a subjective ‘chill’ are not an adequate substitute for a claim of specific present objective harm or a threat of specific future harm.” *Laird v. Tatum*, 408 U.S. 1, 13–14 (1972). “It is not enough that [a] complaint sets forth facts from which we could imagine an injury sufficient to satisfy Article III’s standing requirements.” *Elend*

v. Basham, 471 F.3d 1199, 1206 (11th Cir. 2006). Instead, an injury-in-fact must be imminent. *Clapper v. Amnesty Int’l USA*, 568 U.S. 398, 409 (2013) (noting that the “threatened injury must be *certainly impending*”, “allegations of *possible* future injury are not sufficient.” (emphases in original); *Dream Defs. v. Governor*, 57 F.4th 879, 887 (11th Cir. 2023) (“A threat of future injury is sufficient to establish standing when the threatened injury is certainly impending or there is a substantial risk that the harm will occur.” (internal marks omitted)). “Immediacy, in this context, means reasonably fixed and specific in time and not too far off.” *Bloedorn v. Grube*, 631 F.3d 1218, 1228 (11th Cir. 2011). Any imminency argument by Plaintiff is undercut by the numerous steps the Board must pursue to take action regarding any university, *see infra* Part I.a.ii., all of which would necessarily require publicly-noticed meetings, *see* § 120.525, Fla. Stat.

To be objectively reasonable (and thus actionable), a chilling effect must carry a “credible threat of prosecution” by the *defendant*—here, the Board. *Pittman v. Cole*, 267 F.3d 1269, 1283–84 (11th Cir. 2001). “[I]f no credible threat of prosecution looms, the chill is insufficient to sustain the burden that Article III imposes.” *Id.*; *accord Wilson v. State Bar of Ga.*, 132 F.3d 1422, 1428 (11th Cir. 1998). A plaintiff’s claim that it “feel[s] inhibited” is insufficient; “persons having no fears of state prosecution except those that are imaginary or speculative, are not to be accepted as appropriate

plaintiffs.” *Younger v. Harris*, 401 U.S. 37, 42 (1971); accord *City of S. Miami v. Governor*, 65 F.4th 631, 638 (11th Cir. 2023) (“[W]e have rejected the argument that plaintiffs have standing based on their subjective fear of harm and its chilling effect.” (marks omitted)).

Plaintiff has not shown that it faces a substantially likely threat of future punishment by anyone—and certainly not by the Board. See *Link v. Diaz*, No. 4:21-cv-00271-MW/MAF, 2023 WL 2984726, at *5–6 (N.D. Fla. Apr. 17, 2023) (observing lack of evidence that Board of Governors could enforce challenged statute against individual students or professors, as opposed to institutions, and concluding plaintiffs lacked standing). Instead, Plaintiff rests on its “highly speculative fear” of future action stemming from “the decisions of independent actors”—namely, the University. *City of S. Miami*, 65 F.4th at 637. Absent a credible threat of prosecution by the Board, Plaintiff’s asserted chilling effect is insufficient to confer standing.

ii. Traceability & Redressability

For similar reasons, Plaintiff cannot establish that their claimed injuries are traceable to or redressable by an injunction against the Board of Governors. *NFC Freedom, Inc.*, 2023 WL 7283920, at * 4 (noting plaintiffs’ obligation to prove their injuries are “redressable with an injunction directed at *these Defendants*” (emphasis supplied)). “[I]t must be *the effect of the court’s judgment on the defendant*”—not an

absent third party—“that redresses the plaintiff’s injury.” *Jacobson v. Florida Sec’y of State*, 974 F.3d 1236, 1254 (11th Cir. 2020) (quotation omitted).

The Chancellor’s Memorandum has no independent legal effect and is not itself enforceable.¹² Enjoining its “enforcement” therefore does not redress any injury. Enjoining the Board from deactivating Plaintiff would ring equally hollow, because it cannot deactivate Plaintiff in the first place. The University ultimately controls the recognition and non-recognition of student groups.

The author of the memorandum—Chancellor Rodrigues—has no independent statutory enforcement authority, separate from the Board of Governors as a body. *See* §§ 1001.706, 1008.322, Fla. Stat. To be sure, the Board exercises a general oversight authority over state universities, including general authority to enforce state law. But that general authority does not reach individual students or student groups; that authority is delegated to universities. Thus, the Board’s oversight of the State University System does not provide the necessary nexus between the Board and Plaintiff to satisfy Article III. *See Falls*, 609 F. Supp. 3d 1273 (rejecting teacher plaintiffs’ argument that Board of Education might withhold funds from school districts pursuant to its general statutory authority; teachers’ theory of standing “require[d] the Court to stack

¹² Plaintiff offers no evidence to the contrary, and none is found in Florida’s Education Code.

multiple layers of inferences” and “require[d] too many inferential leaps to establish standing at the preliminary injunction stage”).

An injunction can issue only against state officials with authority to enforce the challenged law. *Whole Woman’s Health v. Jackson*, 595 U.S. 30, 44 (2021) (“[P]etitioners do not direct this Court to any enforcement authority the attorney general possesses in connection with S. B. 8 that a federal court might enjoin him from exercising.”); *Jacobson*, 974 F.3d at 1241 (“And any injury they might suffer is neither fairly traceable to the Secretary nor redressable by a judgment against her because she does not enforce the challenged law.”). Otherwise, with no enforcement authority to enjoin, the injunction redresses no injury traceable to the defendant.¹³ In this circuit, general statutory enforcement authority is insufficient to confer Article III standing. *Support Working Animals*, 8 F.4th at 1204; *Lewis*, 944 F.3d at 1298–99.

It is not enough for Plaintiff to assert that the Chancellor’s Memorandum endorses future deactivation. By analogy, in *Support Working Animals*, 8 F.4th at 1203–05, the Court held that the Attorney General’s participation in the Constitutional Revision Commission’s drafting of a proposed amendment to Florida’s Constitution was insufficient to establish traceability with respect to the future enforcement of the

¹³ For the same reasons, a suit against the Board falls outside of the *Ex Parte Young* exception to Eleventh Amendment immunity, which requires the defendant to have an enforcement role over the challenged action to justify prospective relief. *Luckey v. Harris*, 860 F.2d 1012, 1015–16 (11th Cir. 1988); *Namphy v. DeSantis*, 493 F. Supp. 3d 1130, 1137 (N.D. Fla. 2020).

amendment. Relying on its earlier decision in *Jacobson*, the Court observed that “an official’s role in crafting duly enacted legislation can[not] satisfy the traceability requirement,” and noted that plaintiffs’ injuries instead arose from “the independent actions of . . . the Florida voters” who approved the proposed amendment. 974 F.3d at 1204.

The same is true here. If the University ever deactivates Plaintiff, the Chancellor’s role in crafting a Memorandum that anticipated that outcome is insufficient to confer standing to sue the Board.

In *Support Working Animals*, the court also found that plaintiffs’ claims were not redressable by enjoining the Attorney General from enforcing the challenged law because the Attorney General did not have enforcement authority. 8 F.4th at 1205. Again, the same is true here: the Chancellor’s Memorandum is not enforceable, and the Board does not decide which student groups at Florida’s universities will or will not be recognized. An injunction prohibiting the Board from taking actions it cannot take does not provide redress. *See id.* The Board’s general authority under section 1008.322 does not change this result. *Id.* at 1204; *see also Link*, 2023 WL 2984726, at *5 (“Defendant Boards’ recent exercise of their general enforcement authority to discipline other actors not before this Court does not move the ball. Those examples involved disciplinary action against governing bodies . . . and not individual professors or teachers who ran afoul of state law or policy.”).

Aside from the insufficiency of this generic authority to prove traceability and redressability, Plaintiff offers no evidence that the Board has taken or intends to take any of the steps set forth in section 1008.322 as a means of “enforcing” the Chancellor’s Memorandum. It is pure speculation to anticipate what the Board might do in the future or when, or how the resolution of each step in the process might turn out.

To illustrate, even if the Board initiated steps under section 1008.322 to investigate the University’s compliance with state law related to Plaintiff’s status, Plaintiff must assume the Board would find a violation and then take further undefined steps to achieve compliance by the University. Plaintiff must assume these steps will not only occur, but occur imminently. Plaintiff must also assume that the necessary outcome of these progressive steps would be that, at some point along the way, the University would decide to deactivate Plaintiff. The ultimate (potential) act of deactivation is too attenuated from the Board of Governors, and the interim hypothetical steps are built on too many speculative assumptions to confer standing against the Board.

Even less plausible is the Board’s ability to directly reach individual student groups, which are squarely under the delegated purview of their sponsoring institutions. Without evidence or authority showing a nexus between Plaintiff and the Board, “this Court cannot fill in the blanks for Plaintiffs.” *NFC Freedom, Inc.*, 2023 WL 7283920, at *7; *see also id.* (discussing *Falls* and noting that plaintiff lacked standing

to pursue a free-speech claim when the Board’s conduct was “only tied to punishing educational institutions”).

In sum, an injunction prohibiting the Board from deactivating Plaintiff would not redress any imminent harm, and an injunction prohibiting “enforcement” of the Chancellor’s Memorandum is equally futile. Plaintiff failed to establish constitutional standing and is therefore unlikely to succeed on the merits of its First Amendment claim.

b. Plaintiff’s Claim is Not Ripe.

Speculation and assumption, divorced from a concrete and particularized injury, are the hallmarks of an unripe claim. For the same reasons Plaintiff lacks standing, Plaintiff’s claims are also unripe. Plaintiff’s claim depends on future contingencies that may or may not occur. Further factual development is necessary for Plaintiff’s claim to materialize—and for this Court to adjudicate it. This warrants dismissal on ripeness grounds and precludes the extraordinary remedy of a preliminary injunction.

“The ripeness doctrine involves consideration of both jurisdictional and prudential concerns.” *Digital Props.*, 121 F.3d at 589. It is designed “to prevent courts, through avoidance or premature adjudication, from entangling themselves in abstract disagreements over administrative policies, and also to protect the agencies from judicial interference until an administrative decision has been formalized and its effects felt in a concrete way by the challenging parties.” *Abbott Labs. v. Gardner*, 387 U.S.

136, 148–49 (1967). Here, Plaintiff’s claim is not “sufficiently mature,” and the issues are not “sufficiently defined and concrete, to permit effective decisionmaking by the court.” *Pittman*, 121 F.3d at 1278. (quoting *Digital Props.*, 121 F.3d at 589).

The Eleventh Circuit’s ripeness inquiry evaluates “(1) the fitness of the issues for judicial decision and (2) the hardship to the parties of withholding court consideration.” *Club Madonna, Inc.*, 924 F.3d at 1380 (marks omitted). “Concerning fitness for judicial decision, [courts] ask whether the parties raise an issue that we can decide without further factual development and whether the institutional interests of the court and agency favor immediate review.” *Id.* “[C]laims are less likely to be considered ‘fit’ for adjudication when they venture beyond purely legal issues or when they require speculation about contingent future events.” *Pittman*, 267 F.3d at 1278 (marks omitted).

Here, Plaintiff’s claim is not fit for adjudication for the reasons articulated in *Club Madonna* and *Pittman*: it does not involve pure legal issues, but instead demands speculation about contingent future events, and therefore cannot be decided without further factual development.

In *Digital Properties*, 121 F.3d at 588–90, the Eleventh Circuit found unripe a First Amendment claim founded on informal representations by a zoning department employee that were not memorialized in a final decision of the zoning department. In concluding the claim was unripe, the court heavily weighed the plaintiff’s failure to

wait for a “conclusive response” from the decisionmaker. *Id.* at 590. The plaintiff, “in its haste to preserve its perceived First Amendment rights, failed to present a mature claim for review.” *Id.*

This Plaintiff made the same mistake. As in *Digital Properties*, the remarks of a single official do not give rise to justiciable claims, and a fear that the University might deactivate it in the future does not impute to the Board of Governors an infringement of Plaintiff’s rights. Plaintiff’s conviction that its rights have been violated “bred impatience and prompted it to file an unripe claim.” *Id.* The Chancellor’s Memorandum does not bind anyone, the Board has taken no formal action, and the University has not initiated the deactivation process or indicated any plan to do so. Accordingly, “this action only constitutes a potential dispute” and this Court should decline to resolve it. *Id.* at 591.

c. The Chancellor’s Memorandum Does Not Violate the First Amendment.

The Board of Governors’ statement that the University has a basis to take action against Plaintiff does not violate the First Amendment.¹⁴ In addition to lacking standing and ripeness, Plaintiff is unlikely to succeed on the merits of its claim because the

¹⁴ As explained in the Board’s Motion to Dismiss, Plaintiff’s Complaint invokes several strands of First Amendment claims under a single cause of action. For purposes of the preliminary injunction analysis, Plaintiff has failed to establish a likelihood of success on the merits under any theory. *Cf. Christian Legal Soc’y Ch. of the Univ. of Cal. Hastings Coll. of Law v. Martinez*, 561 U.S. 661, 680 (2010) (reasoning that based on the underlying facts and claims, it made “little sense to treat CLS’s speech and association claims as discrete” and relying on “limited-public-

issuance of the Chancellor’s Memorandum does not violate Plaintiff’s First Amendment rights.

The Chancellor’s Memorandum has no legal effect on Plaintiff. Plaintiff’s claim therefore lacks any state action to which a First Amendment analysis can apply. The Chancellor’s demand for action and exhortation to vigilance by Florida’s state universities does violate the First Amendment. The First Amendment does not prevent the Chancellor or Board from holding and expressing their own viewpoints. *Pleasant Grove City v. Sumnum*, 555 U.S. 460, 467–68 (2009) (“A government entity has the right to speak for itself [and] is entitled to say what it wishes.” (citations and marks omitted)).

The Chancellor’s Memorandum is akin to an open letter, much like the dozens of statements released by public officials across the country on the same topic over the last ten weeks. The Chancellor’s Memorandum is no more actionable than these innumerable statements by other public officials.¹⁵ *See Rust v. Sullivan*, 500 U.S. 173, 193 (1991) (finding the government’s expression of preferences does not violate the

forum precedents [to] supply the appropriate framework for assessing both” types of claims).

¹⁵ This Court need not ignore its independent knowledge of widely-reported public statements. *See United States v. Marino*, 562 F.2d 941, 944 (5th Cir. 1977) (factfinders “are not to be presumed ignorant of what everybody else knows” and “are allowed to act upon matters within their general knowledge, without any testimony on those matters”); *Namphy*, 493 F. Supp. 3d at 1144 (“This Court, like any factfinder . . . does not check its common sense at the door.”).

First Amendment, and recognizing the “basic difference between direct state interference with a protected activity and state encouragement of an alternative activity”).

Even if the mere issuance of the Chancellor’s Memorandum implicated the First Amendment, the Memorandum here does not violate Plaintiff’s constitutional rights. At most, a university-sponsored student organization system is a limited public forum, *see Christian Legal Society*, 561 U.S. at 679 n.12, subject to reasonable, viewpoint-neutral restrictions related to the university’s educational mission and the goals of the forum, *id.* at 685, 687 n.16; *Rosenberger v. Rector & Visitors of Univ. of Va.*, 515 U.S. 819, 829–30 (1995). In this context, content-based restrictions are permissible “if [they] preserve[] the purpose of the limited forum.” *Gay Lesbian Bisexual All. v. Pryor*, 110 F.3d 1543, 1549 (11th Cir. 1997). The Chancellor’s Memorandum satisfies these principles.

Universities have a “significant interest in ensuring safety and order on campus.” *Bloedorn v. Grube*, 631 F.3d 1218, 1238 (11th Cir. 2011). “[P]rotecting the safety and convenience of persons using a public forum is a valid governmental objective.” *Id.* (citation and marks omitted); *see also Yeasin v. Durham*, 719 F. App’x 844, 851–52 (10th Cir. 2018) (“[T]he Supreme Court believes that the material-and-substantial-disruption test applies in the university setting”).

Universities need not tolerate a threat of material disruption in opening a limited forum, or force students to tolerate threats to their ability to receive an education or

physical safety. *Healy*, 408 U.S. at 189 (“Associational activities need not be tolerated where they infringe on reasonable campus rules, interrupt classes, or substantially interfere with the opportunity of other students to obtain an education.”); *Jane Doe I v. Valencia Coll. Bd. of Trs.*, 838 F.3d 1207, 1212 (11th Cir. 2016) (“[T]he employees must tolerate the students’ complaints about the transvaginal ultrasounds unless they can reasonably forecast that the expression will lead to substantial disruption of or material interference with school activities.” (marks omitted)); *Ala. Student Party v. Student Gov’t Ass’n of the Univ. of Ala.*, 867 F.2d 1344, 1347 (11th Cir. 1989) (recognizing legitimate interest in “minimiz[ing] the disruptive effect of campus electioneering”); *Jenkins v. La. State Bd. of Educ.*, 506 F.2d 992, 1003 (5th Cir. 1975) (“[T]hese organizers initially provoked the group action which led to the disorder and the disturbances The actions of appellants resulted in a material disruption of the campus and of the rights of others. They were not protected by the First Amendment.”).¹⁶

¹⁶ The Eleventh Circuit noted the somewhat unsettled nature of the jurisprudence in this area in *Sasser v. Board of Regents of University System of Georgia*, No. 21-14433, 2023 WL 2446720, at *5 (11th Cir. Mar. 10, 2023), finding that a university student suspended for using a racial slur at a university-sponsored event could not defeat qualified immunity against individual defendants because his First Amendment rights were not clearly established. *Sasser* shows that *Healy*’s application is limited and that *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), remains relevant authority, at least in part in the university setting, even if not explicitly extended in full. *Sasser* also does not disturb existing circuit precedent recognizing the legitimacy of the State’s interest in ensuring order and safety on campus, as well as the preservation of the primary educational mission.

The Board has a vested interest in ensuring that all of Florida’s public universities comply with the law, protect student welfare, and pursue their primary purpose of educating students. *Cf. Ala. Student Party*, 867 F.2d at 1346 (“But this is a university, whose primary purpose is *education*, not electioneering. Constitutional protections must be analyzed with due regard to that educational purpose, an approach that has been consistently adopted by the courts.”). When faced with a “reasonable fear” that student groups will jeopardize those ends, the Board is entitled to express those concerns and exhort the universities to be vigilant in fulfilling their obligations. *See id.* at 1346–47 (explaining *Tinker* and noting that school authorities in *Tinker* did not “reasonably fear[] school disruption,” and concluding that student-organization rules before the court “ought to be assessed on the basis of their reasonableness as well”).

The Chancellor’s fears were reasonable. His Memorandum issued against the following backdrop:

- Hamas executed the Operation Al-Aqsa Flood terror attacks on October 7, 2023. Supporters rebranded these attacks as “the Resistance,” which has been championed by national and local SJP chapters alike. In the wake of the October 7 terrorist attacks, SJP—including these local chapters—embraced the “resistance” and atrocities in Israel, not just standing in “solidarity” with the acts of Hamas, but as “PART of this movement.” *E.g.*, Exs. 20, 23, 29, 30; ECF No. 1 at 26.
- By October 9, 2023, Chancellor Rodrigues and Florida’s Commissioner of Education issued a memorandum to university and college presidents condemning the barbaric attacks in Israel and reminding the institutions of their obligations to protect Jewish students. Ex. 27. The same day, state law-enforcement entities issued a memorandum to all Florida law-enforcement agencies encouraging

vigilance in their protection of citizens by refamiliarizing themselves with Florida’s statutory protections from discriminatory harassment on the basis of religion, including on college and university campuses. Ex. 26. These actions are consistent with the later-issued Chancellor’s Memorandum and invoke the same concern: protecting the Jewish community and avoiding disruption.

- Since October 7, national and local SJP chapters have promoted and participated in disruptive walk-outs on campuses in Florida and nationwide. UF SJP was among the chapters that promoted and participated in the national walk-out, Exs. 5, 6, 10, 16, 21, and walk-outs also occurred on the campuses of Florida International University and Florida State University, Ex 9.
- Also in the aftermath of October 7—which national SJP characterizes as a “historic win,” Ex. 29 at 1—Plaintiff received “toolkits” from national SJP instructing and encouraging the implementation of disconcerting tactics on Florida’s campuses, including organizing illegal or disruptive demonstrations such as blockades, sit-ins and occupations, walk-outs, coordinated convergence on university spaces such as cafeterias and student centers, and targeted harassment (such as “bird-dogging” and “call-ins”), *see* Ex. 29 at 2; Ex. 30 at 9–12, and the coordination of and participation in protests that contemplate police confrontation and arrests, *see* Ex. 30 at 6–7.
- The SJP toolkits amplified the goals of Hamas, celebrating the brutal October 7 attacks and instructing local chapters to use imagery glorifying the terror attacks, like graphics of paragliders, in publicizing SJP events. Ex. 29; Ex. 30. The toolkits advocate armed resistance as both “legitimate” and “necessary,” Ex. 29 at 4; *see also* Ex. 20, call for intifada, Ex. 29 at 4, and denounce Israel’s right to exist while characterizing all Israelis as non-civilians and therefore justifying their slaughter, Ex. 29 at 3–4.
- In addition to embracing the “Resistance,” UF SJP’s social-media accounts reveal a disruptive and perhaps illegal “shut down” of Congresswoman Kat Cammack’s office for being a “supporter of Israel,” Ex. 4, and efforts to organize and encourage student walk-outs in concert with national SJP, Exs. 5, 6, 10, 12, 16, 17, 19, 21, 37. UF SJP also links to national SJP’s website on its own Instagram page, Ex. 8, and has historically promoted and co-signed statements alongside national SJP, Exs. 11, 14, 18.

- The day after the terrorist attacks, USF SJP also took to social media, justifying the unspeakable atrocities a “response” to “Israeli zionists,” denying that those atrocities were “terrorism,” and proclaiming their stance in “solidarity” with the events of October 7. Exs. 23, 1. USF SJP’s stance on “solidarity” with the atrocities perpetrated by Hamas is reiterated in an Official Statement issued by the chapter. *See* ECF No. 1 at 26.
- In the weeks following the terrorist attack, disruption occurred during demonstrations at both the University of Florida and Florida Atlantic University, including injuries and hospitalizations resulting from the UF event and an arrest during a pro-Palestinian rally at FAU. Exs. 7, 31.¹⁷

As the dissemination of the national SJP’s two toolkits demonstrate, the national SJP deploys resources, support, and guidance to its local chapters. The Chancellor’s Memorandum reasonably observed this relationship. Examples of the nexus between the national SJP and the UF and USF SJP chapters include:

- UF SJP and USF SJP identify themselves as a local “chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine,” Exs. 1, 2, 3, and national SJP’s has claimed UF SJP and USF SJP as two of its local chapters, Exs. 13, 15.
- National SJP provides resources to UF and SJP, including the “toolkits.” *See, e.g.*, ECF No. 36 at 4–5 ¶¶ 21, 24; at 9–10 ¶¶ 21, 24; at 14–15 ¶¶ 21, 24; at 19–20 ¶¶ 21, 24. National SJP makes other resources beyond the “toolkits” available to local chapters. For example, it advertises that it will reimburse certain costs associated with a local chapter’s attendance at the national SJP conference, *see* Ex. 24, and operates a dedicated “Chapter Support” page.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Also available at* <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/local/2023/10/10/uf-vigil-for-israel-victims-leads-to-dozens-injured-hospitalized/71129088007/>; *and* <https://www.palmbeachpost.com/story/news/local/boca/2023/10/13/israel-hamas-conflict-pro-palestine-march-results-in-3-arrests-at-fau/71168041007/>

¹⁸ *See* <https://nationalsjp.org/support>.

- UF SJP promoted walk-outs organized by national SJP, and multiple Florida universities participated. Exs. 5, 6, 10, 12, 16, 17, 19, 21; *see also* Ex. 9.

Any reasonable observer can identify the obvious nexus between the national NJP and its local chapters—even if that nexus is not formalized or monetized.¹⁹

After the Memorandum’s issuance, the Board received complaint statements against USF SJP from students at USF, *see* Exs. 25, 41,²⁰ and received dozens of emails expressing concerns about USF SJP specifically, *see* Ex. 28. USF SJP is one of the two chapters identified in the Chancellor’s Memorandum, and the substance of the complaints and emails is consistent with many of the concerns underlying the Chancellor’s Memorandum. Recently, Rutgers University, a public university in New Jersey, suspended its SJP chapter due to disruptions on campus—the same concern prompting the Chancellor’s Memorandum. Ex. 22.²¹ Private universities—including

¹⁹ Among those observers is the New York Times, which acknowledged the intentional absence of bureaucratic relationships between national SJP and its chapters, and nevertheless characterized SJP as a nationwide organization comprised of a network of affiliated chapters with common objectives. *See* Ex. 33, *also available at* <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/17/us/students-justice-palestine-campus-protests.html>.

²⁰ *See also* Ex. 42, Tweet by @ElbazStarinsky (Nov. 16, 2023), *also available at* <https://twitter.com/elbazstarinsky/status/1725297372048027774?s=46&t=ogN6JC9SMWqphCsEESArUg>.

²¹ *See also* Adam Sabes, *Rutgers Univ. Suspends Students for Justice in Palestine Chapter*, FOX NEWS (Dec. 12, 2023), *available at* <https://www.foxnews.com/us/rutgers-university-suspends-students-justice-palestine>.

Columbia, George Washington, and Brandeis Universities—have suspended their SJP chapters as well. *See* Exs. 34, 35, 36.

This context underpinned the Memorandum, which is consistent with the Board of Governors’ goals of safeguarding public universities’ primary educational mission and students’ ability to obtain their education on campus. The Eleventh Circuit has thus made clear that deference is owed to the “educational mission of institutes of higher learning” and universities’ corresponding “right to exclude even First Amendment activities that violate reasonable campus rules or substantially interfere with the opportunity of other students to obtain an education.” *Ala. Student Party*, 867 F.2d at 1345; *accord id.* at 1347 (“[T]hese principles translate into a degree of deference to school officials who seek to reasonably regulate speech and campus activities in furtherance of the school’s educational mission.”). The Chancellor’s Memorandum is reasonable considering the forum’s educational purpose and implicates only unprotected conduct or expressive activities that are properly constrained in the university context.

With respect to student organizations, the “proper analysis centers on the level of control a university may exert over the school-related activities of its students,” especially when the university “need not have [a student-organization system] at all.” *Id.* at 1345–46. The First Amendment does not require universities or the Board to sacrifice universities’ educational mission or the safety of the university community.

Healy, 408 U.S. at 189; *Ala. Student Party*, 867 F.2d at 1345–47. Nor must they remain muzzled until actual disruption—or violence—breaks out. *See Keeton v. Anderson-Wiley*, 664 F.3d 865, 877 (11th Cir. 2011) (the government need not “allow events to unfold to the extent that the disruption to the program is manifest before taking action” (marks omitted)).

In expressing its concern over national SJP and its nexus to Florida chapters, the Chancellor’s Memorandum invoked Florida’s material-support statute, § 775.33, Fla. Stat., university codes of conduct, and the well-established legitimate interests in student safety and pursuit of education, ECF No. 1 at 20–21—none of which is an unconstitutional viewpoint-based restriction. Plaintiff’s objections to the application of those laws and policies may be viewpoint-based, but this does not convert laws and policies that apply to everyone into First Amendment violations. *Keeton*, 664 F.3d at 875 (“Keeton confuses her viewpoint-based objections to ASU’s officials’ actions with viewpoint discrimination.”). The Chancellor’s Memorandum does not purport to prohibit, for example, speech or viewpoints critical of Israel or supportive of Palestinian freedom, nor does it support an inference that university regulations or Florida statutes do not apply equally to all similarly situated groups.²²

²² The Chancellor’s recent comments in the press are consistent with the Memorandum by focusing not on protected First Amendment expression, but on harassment, threats, violence, and illegal disruption on campuses. Gabriella Pinos, *Ray Rodrigues discusses free speech on Florida University campuses*, WUSF.ORG (Dec.

Faced with extraordinary tensions and fear on campuses and troubling indicia of disruption from SJP, the Chancellor took a reasonable, proactive step based on policies and laws of general applicability: he exhorted universities to follow their existing legal obligations to ensure SJP chapters do not engage in the unlawful tactics that the national SJP encouraged them to deploy, or in other conduct that would violate university policies or state law. *See* ECF No. 1 at 21 (referencing “demonstrations that delve beyond protected First Amendment speech”). This call to “reasonably regulate speech and campus activities in furtherance of the school’s educational mission” does not violate the First Amendment. *Ala. Student Party*, 867 F.2d at 1347.

Finally, *Healy*, 408 U.S. 169, is distinguishable. First, the defendant college in *Healy* refused to officially recognize the plaintiff student group. Plaintiff remains active, and no evidence suggests that the status quo will imminently change.

Second, the student group in *Healy* sued the only entity authorized to approve or disapprove of the student group: the college. The Board of Governors has no such authority.

Third, the non-recognition decision in *Healy* is substantively distinguishable. In *Healy*, the college president overruled a committee decision that would have recognized the student group, but the available record did not support the justifications

16, 2023), *available at* <https://www.wusf.org/education/2023-12-15/ray-rodriques-discusses-florida-university-free-speech-campuses>.

for the President’s decision. *Id.* at 173–79. The Court confirmed that a threat of material disruption could have constituted a sufficient basis for non-recognition of a student group, as would the student group’s refusal to abide by valid campus regulations. *Id.* at 188–189. Unlike in *Healy*, the Chancellor’s Memorandum was not the product of “undifferentiated fear or apprehension,” *id.* at 191, or a naked imputation of “guilt by association alone,” *id.* at 186, but rather of concrete, real-world events, as well as documents sent to Plaintiff encouraging disruption on Florida campuses and openly claiming solidarity with Operation Al-Aqsa Flood.

Jewish students are understandably terrified. Campus communities are on edge, while national SJP encourages the mobilization of “resistance” and disruption—and justifies “armed struggle”—across Florida’s campuses. Neither the Board of Governors nor Florida’s universities must sit silent.

II. PLAINTIFF FAILED TO DEMONSTRATE A LIKELIHOOD OF IRREPARABLE HARM ABSENT AN INJUNCTION.

There is no indication that Plaintiff will face irreparable harm absent an injunction against the Board. Plaintiff must clearly establish imminent harm that only the issuance of an injunction can avoid. *Ne. Fla. Chapter of Ass’n of Gen. Contractors of Am. v. City of Jacksonville*, 896 F.2d 1283, 1285 (11th Cir. 1990). A mere possibility of future harm is not enough.

Plaintiff has articulated a conceivable future harm: deactivation by the University. However, Plaintiff has not clearly established—or even articulated—that this

harm is imminent absent an injunction. Plaintiff has not pleaded or proven, for example, that the University has expressed any intention to deactivate it, that the University's due-process regulations would not apply if the University initiates steps towards deactivation, or how the Board would play any role in the deactivation decision or process.

A preliminary injunction is warranted only when *necessary* to avoid imminent, irreparable harm that will occur “in the absence of its issuance.” *Doran v. Salem Inn, Inc.*, 422 U.S. 922, 931 (1975); *see also Georgia v. President of the United States*, 46 F.4th 1283, 1303 (11th Cir. 2022) (an injunction should be “no more burdensome to the defendant than necessary to provide complete relief to the plaintiffs”). An injunction prohibiting the Board from deactivating Plaintiff is not necessary to provide relief—and certainly not complete relief—because, as explained, the Board cannot deactivate student groups. Likewise, an injunction prohibiting Board from “enforcing” the Chancellor’s Memorandum is unnecessary because the Memorandum is not enforceable. And an injunction that prohibits the Board from exercising its general oversight authority with respect to the University in a manner that violates Plaintiff’s relies on speculation and amounts to an obey-the-law injunction that is equally unnecessary to avoid irreparable harm.

III. THE PUBLIC INTEREST WEIGHS AGAINST THE REQUESTED INJUNCTION.

The final factor also weighs against the requested relief. When the party opposing the injunction is the government, the party's and public's interests merge. *Swain*, 958 F.3d at 1091.

Here, the public interest weighs against the requested injunction because no interest is served by forbidding a state entity to do something it cannot do, or to speculatively preclude the Board from properly exercising its legal authority in the future. Similarly, as noted, an injunction directing the Board to refrain from exercising its authority in the future in a manner that violates the First Amendment is a speculative and impermissible obey-the-law injunction that redresses no injury and serves no interest. *See Fla. Ass'n of Rehab. Facilities, Inc. v. State of Fla. Dep't of Health & Rehab. Servs.*, 225 F.3d 1208, 1222 (11th Cir. 2000); *Rhiner v. Jones*, No. 2:15-cv-14319-RLR, 2018 WL 9391726, at *2 (S.D. Fla. Mar. 14, 2018) (denying preliminary injunction in First Amendment retaliation case that was “nothing more than a prophylactic one of assuring that no unconstitutional conduct will occur in the future” (citation and marks omitted)). Like the first two factors in the preliminary-injunction analysis, the final factors weigh against enjoining the Board of Governors.

CONCLUSION

The Chancellor and Board of Governors respectfully request that this Court deny Plaintiff's Motion.

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE

The undersigned certifies that the foregoing response contains 7,886 words and therefore complies with the word limitation requirements in Local Rule 7.1(F).

Dated December 22, 2023.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that, on December 22, 2023, this notice was filed through the Court's CM/ECF system, which will send a notice of electronic filing to all counsel of record.

/s/ Ashley H. Lukis
Ashley Lukis (FBN 106391)
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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE



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Wednesday | October 25th

5pm | Starting @ 13th & University



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Please join us this Wednesday to DEMAND the University of Florida to divest from Israel and condemn the genocide of Palestinians. We will end our demonstration in Turlington to hold a vigil for our Palestinian martyrs ❤️

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Please join us this Wednesday to DEMAND the University of Florida to divest from Israel and condemn the genocide of Palestinians. We will end our demonstration in Turlington to hold a vigil for our Palestinian martyrs ❤️

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LOCAL

'I assumed I was getting shot at': Dozens injured after UF vigil for Israel erupts in chaos

Staff report Gainesville Sun

Published 4:46 p.m. ET Oct. 10, 2023 | Updated 7:44 p.m. ET Oct. 10, 2023

Hundreds of students and others attending a Jewish-led candlelight vigil Monday evening at the University of Florida ran for their lives believing they were under threat of attack.

Dozens were trampled and injured in the student stampede, sending about 30 people to be treated for the injuries at UF Health Shands Hospital or on-site by first responders. Others crowded the emergency room in support of those hurt.

The vigil, called "Unity with Israel," was held at Turlington Plaza on UF campus to stand in solidarity with the more than 1,000 people who were slaughtered by the terrorist attacks in Israel over the weekend. At least 14 Americans have also been killed in the attack with about 20 more missing. Among those killed were hundreds attending a music festival to celebrate peace, parents shielding bullets from their kids and babies.

With the rise of antisemitism and gun violence, several students told The Gainesville Sun Tuesday morning that they were already on edge prior to attending the large gathering led by Jewish student groups and that the quick commotion set them into a panic.

Live updates: Israel regains control of Gaza border; Iran warns of 'heavier slap'

More: Israeli retaliation to be felt 'for generations'; FBI searching for Americans impacted by attack: Recap

Witnesses recall commotion at UF vigil for Israel

"I was under the assumption that it was a terrorist attack of some kind. I assumed I was getting shot at," said former UF student Matt Gold.

Like Gold, students had a split second to decide whether they also were going to run. Everyone bolted, some falling over each other. Gold said he ran until he felt safe, adding that he saw scores of students hurt in the chaos, including a young woman with a bloodied face.

"Lots of people were crying and shaking. It was apparent people were very shaken up," said the 30-year-old, who lost his Yamaka/kippah along the way.

Shoes, hats, bags, clothing and water containers were strewn across the plaza grounds. Police, many already posted nearby, swarmed the scene and taped off the area.

Skylar Hendler, a 20-year-old UF graduate, said she had the same experience and immediately thought of her family as she ran.

"I immediately tried calling my mom while I was running," she said. "If there was a terrorist attack, and I was scared that I would get shot, then I wanted to have my mom on the phone before it happened and say goodbyes," she said.

Her mom didn't answer, so she recorded a goodbye video.

"I was having a panic attack running and I remember thinking to myself, my body was like malfunctioning because I couldn't breathe, and I was running so fast," she said. "I didn't want to stop until I got to my car because it was either the thought of slowing down or seeing your family again."

More: UF vigil for Israel victims sent into chaos after scare, roughly 30 went to hospital

She watched as her friend vomited from the rush, while another was pushed to the gravel.

It's still unclear exactly what set off the commotion. Campus police said a woman in the crowd fainted and people misinterpreted a call for "911." Others say they heard popping noises or loud bangs. It's believed that students dropped large metal hydro flask water bottles against the concrete creating some confusion, which can be heard in some of the videos online.

"It was overwhelming, suddenly we were all on top of each other on the ground, people screaming," one person wrote on X.

Witnesses at Shands told The Gainesville Sun that roughly 30 people packed the emergency room, several of whom had concussions and were given stitches for cuts. At least one student had a cast put on her leg, they said. UF Health officials said Tuesday morning that about 20

were treated and released, most of whom received minor injuries. HCA North Florida Hospital has not released any information.

UF's communications department, however, previously shared conflicting information, claiming only five students were injured and treated on-site. The department has yet to issue an updated official statement about those injured, leading multiple news outlets to misreport the gravity of the situation.

"There were definitely serious enough injuries that kept people in the hospital for hours," said Chanie Goldman, co-director of the Chabad Jewish Student Center, who left the hospital around 2 a.m.

Before the chaos erupted at the UF Israel vigil

Prior to the event erupting in chaos, several attendees told The Sun it was a moving and beautiful ceremony that brought several people to tears.

President Ben Sasse was in attendance and condemned the actions of the Hamas terrorists.

"The world has just witnessed the largest slaughter of Jewish people since the Holocaust," he said to the crowd. "The videos are gut-wrenching. Stories make your stomach churn. Hundreds of innocent civilians are dead. Toddlers, teens, and grandparents have been taken hostage. Young women have suffered violence too terrible to speak. Families have been burned alive while hiding in their homes. Bodies have been mutilated as terrorists laugh and hand out candy in celebration of evil. Hamas' terror attacks are heinous and deserve the condemnation of civilized people around the world. Like you, Melissa and I are grieving and angry."

Following Sasse's speech, others took to the microphone, including a former soldier for the Israel Defense Forces. Several attendees recorded part of the former soldier's prayer which was soon interrupted by panic.

Nick VanZandt, a 19-year-old UF student, was just a few feet away from the veteran when the crowd began to scream and run. He said he first thought the event was being rushed by counter-protesters.

"I was just confused and panicked," he said, adding that he had cuts from being trampled on by others. "I'm just sad that the event ended the way that it did."

UF officials said there are resources available for counseling or support through the Campus Assistance and Resources for Empowerment (CARE) by submitting an online form. Leaders at Chabad UF and Hillel are also willing to provide anything students need, they said.

"We are grateful for the safety of all involved and that the injuries reported appear to be minor. We know the fear created by this unfortunate event has left some in need of support," UF officials co-wrote in a release.

UF police are expected to have an increased presence around campus over the coming days.

Gainesville Mayor Harvey Ward also addressed the incident Tuesday, saying the city is ready to help if needed.


"These are difficult times, and we should all be able to lean on each other in events such as last night's vigil," he said. "I certainly understand that so many of our neighbors are dealing with tremendous anxiety, and I know the UF community is working hard to provide a safe, supportive environment."


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- Auraria Campus | 11:30 AM @ Golda Meir House
- Brooklyn College | 12:30 PM @ Bedford Ave in front of campus gates
- Brown University | 12:00 PM @ Main Green
- Butler University
- California Institute of the Arts
- California State University Fullerton
- California state university Long Beach | 1:00 PM @ Central Quad
- California State University, Sacramento | 12:00 PM @ Quad
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Claremont colleges | 1:30 PM @ Bowling green lawn in front of Malott
- Colorado University - Boulder
- Columbia University | 1:00 PM @ Low Library Steps
- CUNY Graduate Center | 3:30 PM @ front of GC building
- CUNY Hunter College | 1:00 PM @ West building entrance
- CUNY John Jay
- CUNY Lehman College | 11-1:15PM @ front of art building
- CUNY School of Law
- DePaul University | 2:00 PM @ Lincoln Park (statue side)
- Drexel University | Drexel Dragon (33rd and Market) to Penn Broken Button
- Eastern Michigan University | 1:00 PM
- Evergreen State College
- Florida International University | 12:30 - 1:30 PM @ 10955 SW 15th Terrace
- Florida State University | 11 AM - 1 PM @ Moore Auditorium Patio & Legacy Walk
- Garfield High School, Seattle WA
- George Mason University | 12:30 PM @ Wilkins Plaza
- George Washington University | 4:30 PM @ US State Dept 23rd St NW
- Georgia Tech | 11:30 AM @ Tech Green



Liked by **_spacebunnies** and others

wearedissenters 🇺🇸 TOMORROW WE WALKOUT 🇺🇸

12:59



nationalsjp



wearedissenters and nationalsjp



WE DEMAND **DIVESTMENT**

Since Oct 7th, Israel has dropped more than 6,000 bombs on Gaza, massacring thousands of Palestinians in their homes.

Schools, hospitals, churches and mosques, evacuation roads — nowhere is safe.

Our universities are complicit in this violence. They invest in the weapons, bombs, and surveillance tech that enable Israel's occupation and genocide of the Palestinian people.



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wearedissenters Join our call for a national walkout WEDNESDAY 10/25 to call for an end to the US-backed siege on Gaza and U.S...

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OCTOBER 20

nenn against the occupation and



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University of Florida



Signed By:

- National Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Houston Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of California- Santa Barbara Students for Justice in Palestine
- Boston University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Rutgers University- New Brunswick Students for Justice in Palestine
- Smith College Students for Justice in Palestine
- Bard College Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Massachusetts- Boston Students for Justice in Palestine
- Students for Justice in Palestine The University of Toledo
- University of Utah Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Utah Pakistani Student Association
- University of Western Ontario Students for Palestinian Human Rights
- Arizona State University Students for Justice in Palestine
- California State University- Fullerton Students for Justice in Palestine
- CUNY Hunter College Palestine Solidarity Alliance
- Florida Atlantic University- Students for justice in Palestine-
- university of Texas-Austin Palestine Solidarity Committee
- University of North Carolina- Chapel Hill Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Massachusetts- Amherst Students for Justice in Palestine
- Students for Justice in Palestine- Drew University
- University of California-Irvine Students for Justice in Palestine
- John Jay College Students for Justice in Palestine
- Butler University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of California- Irvine United Students Against Sweatshops
- University of Michigan- Dearborn Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Florida Students for Justice in Palestine
- North Carolina State University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Fordham University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Florida International University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Jewish Voice for Peace- Santa Barbra



ufsjp Students all over the country are condemning Trump's attempt to silence us through his executive order on "condemning...

more

12:59



nationalsjp



wearedissenters and nationalsjp

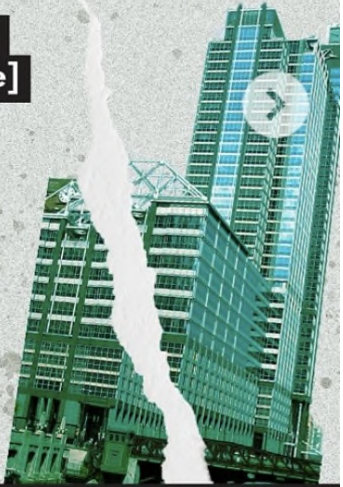


OUR DEMANDS:

1. OUR UNIVERSITIES **DIVEST FROM WEAPONS' MANUFACTURERS WHICH ARM **ISRAEL'S GENOCIDE** IN GAZA.**

[Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, and Northrop Grumman, and more]

2. AN IMMEDIATE **END TO ISRAEL'S SIEGE ON GAZA AND **U.S. FUNDING** FOR ISRAEL.**



Liked by **thewildestOnion** and others

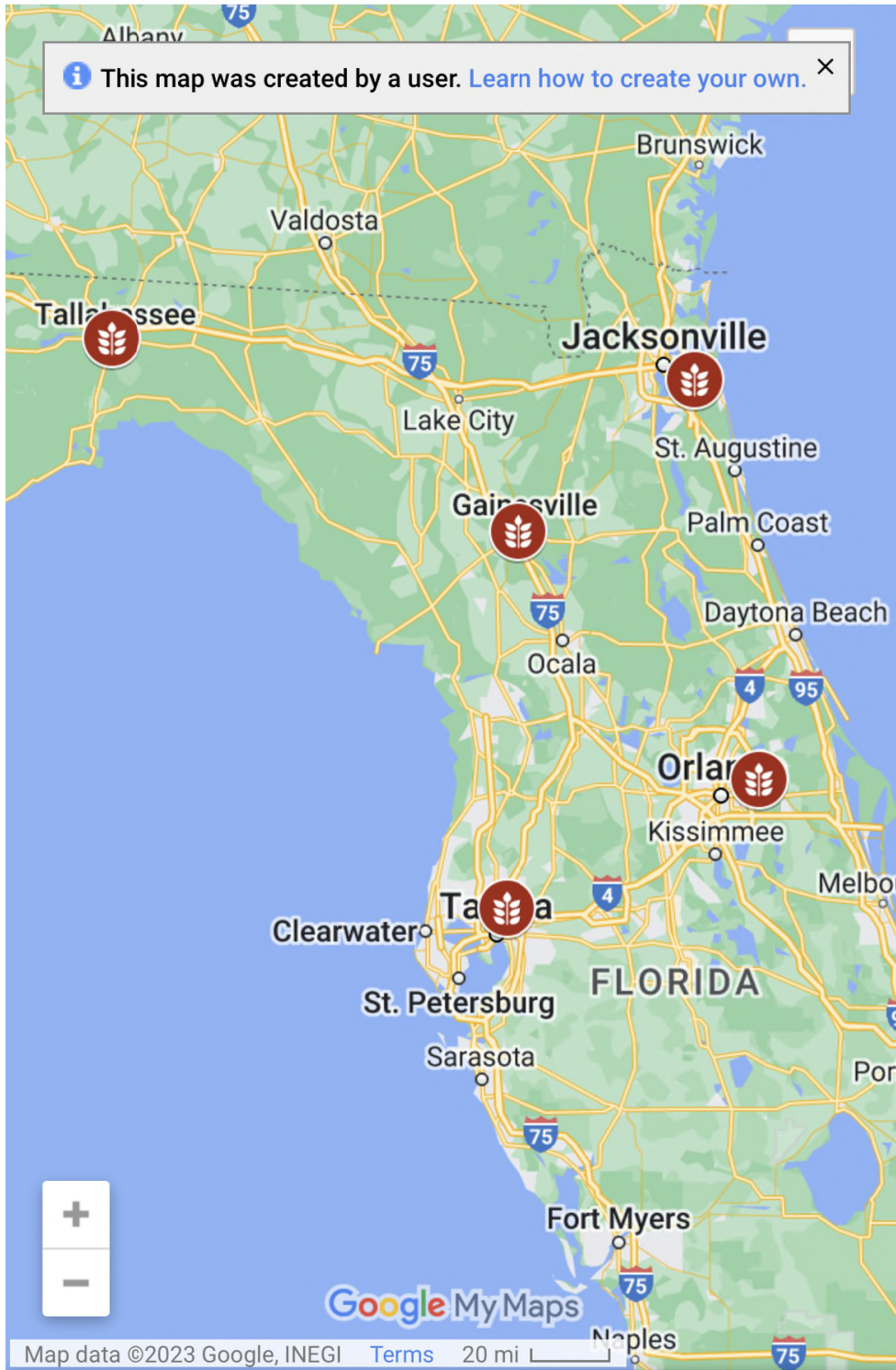
wearedissenters 🔊 Join our call for a national walkout WEDNESDAY 10/25 to call for an end to the US-backed siege on Gaza and U.S...

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OCTOBER 20

4:02



National SJP Map



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Updated List of Signatories:

- University of North Carolina Students for Justice in Palestine
- Bard Students for Justice in Palestine
- UMASS SJP
- Rutgers Newark Students for Justice in Palestine
- Students for Justice in Palestine The University of Toledo
- Students for Justice in Palestine at University of Utah
- Pakistani Student's Association at University of Utah
- SPHR UWU
- Students for Justice in Palestine at ASU
- CSUF Students for Justice in Palestine
- Palestine Solidarity Alliance at CUNY Hunter College
- Students for justice in Palestine FAU
- Palestine Solidarity Committee
- Students for Justice in Palestine - Drew University
- Students for Justice in Palestine - UC Irvine
- John Jay Students for Justice In Palestine
- Students for Justice in Palestine- Butler University
- Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine
- USAS at UC
- SJP University of Michigan Dearborn
- Students for Justice in Palestine at the University of Florida
- Students for Justice in Palestine at NC State University
- Students for Justice in Palestine at Fordham University
- Fordham Socialist Students Coalition
- University of California- Santa Barbara Students for Justice in Palestine
- Jewish Voice for Peace -Santa Barbara
- Young Democratic Socialists of America (YDSA) at UCI
- Students for Justice in Palestine at Occidental College
- Independent Jewish Voices McGill
- Students in Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights McGill
- Solidarity For Palestinian Human Rights at Queen's University
- Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance



ufsjp Within one week, thousands of students across the U.S. and abroad signed on to a statement condemning the execution of...

more

DECEMBER 22, 2019

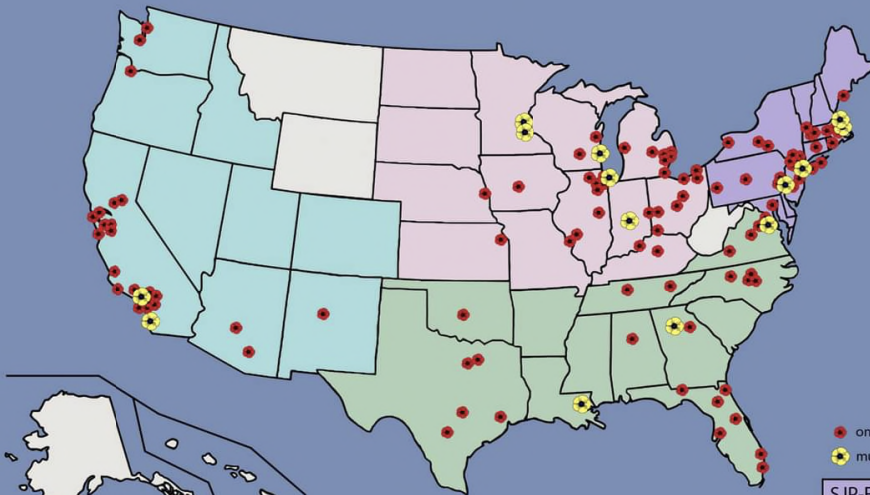


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Students are fighting for justice in Palestine on **163 campuses** nationwide!

Add your voice next semester! Contact us through nationalsjp.org for help starting a new chapter.



National SJP

National Students for Justice in Palestine (NSJP) November 2016

Nov 26, 2016 · 🌐

Can you believe that there are 163 SJPs in the US and counting? And we have cousins in Canada, Mexico, and beyond!

... See more

👍❤️ 74

👍 74

💬 4

➦ 19



19

4:28



nationalsjp



Reimburs...



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PROTEST...



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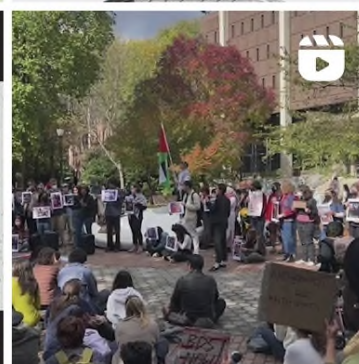
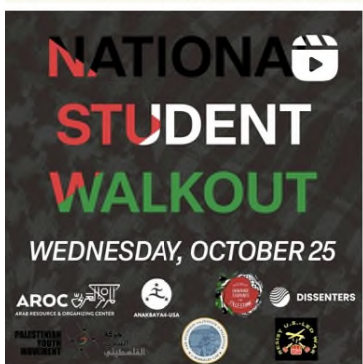
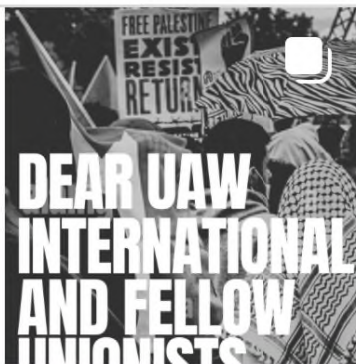
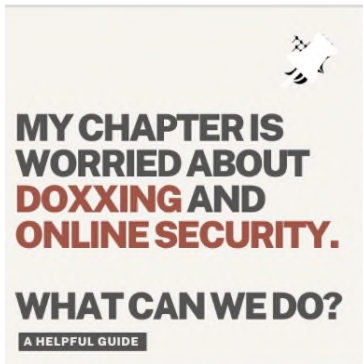


Virtua...

359 posts

8,638 followers

421 following





Post

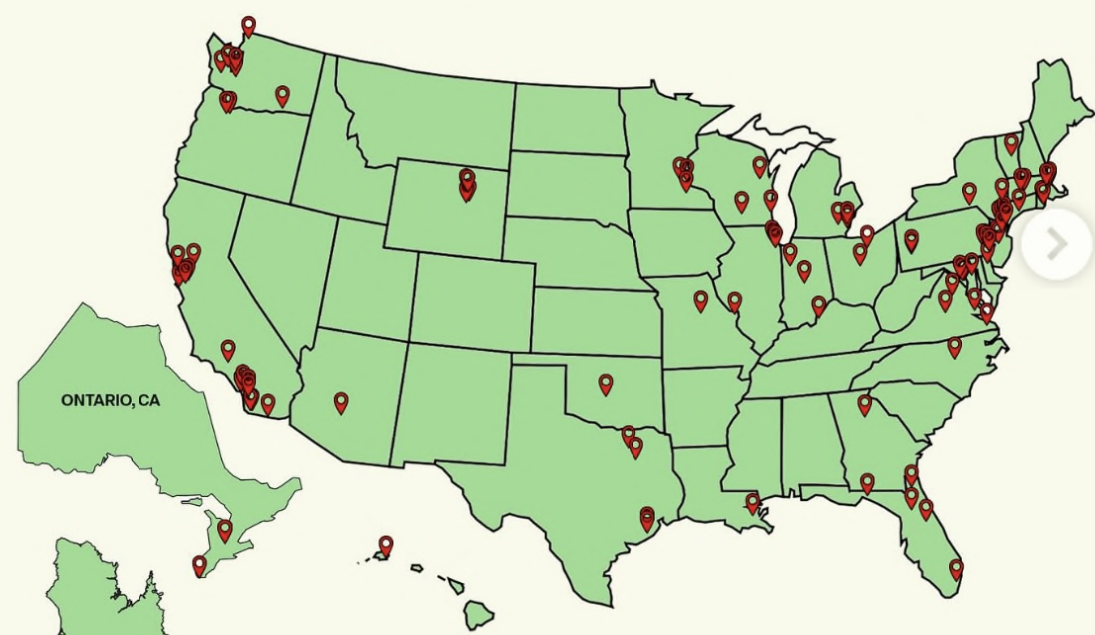


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END THE SEIGE ON GAZA NOW

NORTH AMERICA STUDENT WALKOUT



WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 25TH
JOIN A WALKOUT NEAR YOU



Liked by [_spacebunnies](#) and others

[wearedissenters](#) TOMORROW WE WALKOUT

11:57



UF SJP

Dec 17, 2019 ·



Students all over the country are condemning Trump's attempt to silence us.

At the University of Florida we have experienced administration's attempts to vilify us with false labels. That is why we signed this statement and why we are standing up together to show that we will not halt the movement for justice!

We strongly encourage you to read the full statement below.



National SJP · [Follow](#)

Dec 16, 2019 ·

A united body of Students for Justice in Palestine, SJP United, condemns Donald Trump's executive order on "combat... See more

A UNITED BODY OF STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE

SJP UNITED

CONDEMNS DONALD TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDER ON "COMBAT... ANTI-SEMITISM"

WWW.NATIONALSJP.ORG/SJPUNITEDSTATEM FOR FULL STATEMENT

Signed By:

- National Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Houston Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of California- Santa Barbara Students for Justice in Palestine
- Boston University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Rutgers University- New Brunswick Students for Justice in Palestine
- Smith College Students for Justice in Palestine
- Bard College Students for Justice in Palestine
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- Students for Justice in Palestine- Drew University
- University of California Irvine Students for Justice in Palestine
- John Jay College Students for Justice in Palestine
- Butler University Students for Justice in Palestine

- University of California- Irvine Young Democratic Socialists of America
- Occidental College Students for Justice in Palestine
- McGill University Independent Jewish Voices
- McGill University Students in Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights
- Queens University Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights
- Palestine Solidarity Forum at the University of Capetown
- University of California- Riverside Students for Justice in Palestine
- Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance
- John Hopkins Students for Justice in Palestine
- Eastern Michigan University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Oberlin College Students for a Free Palestine
- Temple University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Swarthmore Students for Justice in Palestine
- Swarthmore Jewish Voice for Peace
- University of California- Irvine Jakara Movement Chapter
- Emory University Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of North Florida Students for Justice in Palestine
- University of Washington Students United for Palestinian Equal Rights
- Grand Valley State University Peace M.E.m.s
- University of California- Santa Barbara United Student Labor Action Coalition
- Florida State University Students for Justice in Palestine
- Harvard College Palestine Solidarity Committee
- Texas A&M University Palestine Solidarity Committee
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Students for Justice in Palestine



uf sjp



ufsjp and islamoncampus



ufsjp **!! NATIONAL WALKOUT !!** ...

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7 DAYS AGO

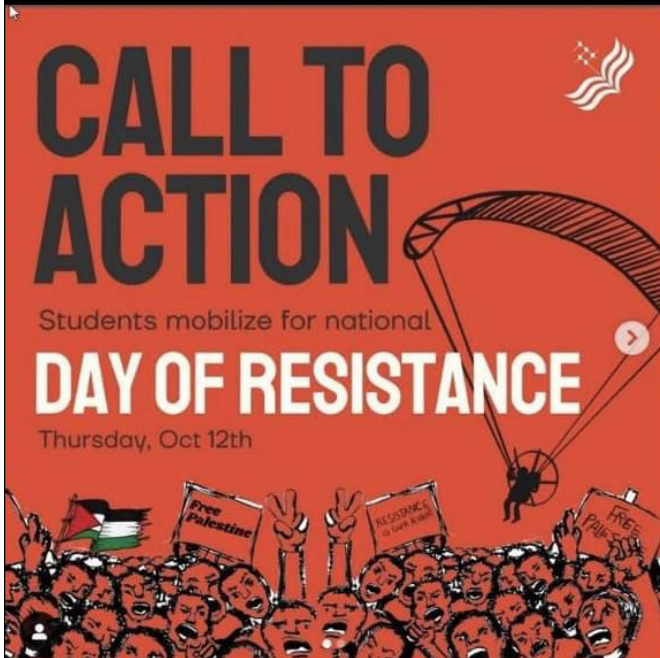


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nationalsjp 🚩 CALL TO ACTION: DAY OF RESISTANCE 🚩

Today, we witness a historic win for the Palestinian resistance: across land, air, and sea, our people have broken down the artificial barriers of the Zionist entity, taking with it the facade of an impenetrable settler colony and reminding each of us that total return and liberation to Palestine is near. Catching the enemy completely by surprise, the Palestinian resistance has captured over a dozen settlements surrounding Gaza along with many occupation soldiers and military vehicles. **This is what it means to Free Palestine: not just slogans and rallies, but armed confrontation with the oppressors.**



Liked by farxyiaaaaaaaa and others
14 HOURS AGO

Add a comment...

Jessica Lindsey

Oct 12 • 🌐



nationalsjp



wearedissenters and nationalsjp



Liked by **thewildestOnion** and others

wearedissenters Join our call for a national walkout WEDNESDAY 10/25 to call for an end to the US-backed siege on Gaza and U.S...

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OCTOBER 20

non against the occupation and



Office of Student Conduct
Bishop House
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
115 College Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8544

<http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu>
p. 848-932-9414
f. 732-932-4154

December 11, 2023

Students for Justice in Palestine Organization



PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL & HAND DELIVERY

Dear Students for Justice in Palestine Organization:

In accordance with the Student Organization Policies and Procedures Interim Action (pg. 12), we are suspending organizational activity, effective immediately.

The policy guide grants this authority when the University determines that there is a reasonable basis to conclude that the continued activities by the student organization pose a substantial and immediate threat to the safety and well-being of others, or the suspension of organizational activities is needed to maintain preservation of the University.

We are implementing this interim suspension of organizational activity based on multiple complaints against Students for Justice in Palestine, which indicates that you allegedly have had multiple cases of disrupting classes, a program, meals, and students studying. There are also allegations of vandalism occurring at the Rutgers Business School while your program was taking place.

Your alleged behavior violates the following provision(s) of the University Code of Student Conduct (UCSC), Section VI, "Rules and Regulations":

- **f. Disruptive or Disorderly Conduct:** Conduct that unreasonably interferes with university activities or with the legitimate activities of any member of the community at large, virtual environment(s) included.

- h. Failure to Comply with University or Civil Authority: Failure to comply with legitimate directives of authorized university officials, law enforcement or emergency personnel, identified as such, in the performance of their duties, including failure to identify oneself when so requested; or violation of the terms of a disciplinary sanction.

- k. Guest Responsibility: Recognized Student Organizations are responsible for the actions of their guests (i.e. fans, performers, non-RU attendees, alum).
- m. Inappropriate Use of Space: Not using University – controlled spaces in accordance with the standards of the particular space.

During the period of this interim suspension of organizational activity, the organization is prohibited from participating in any University activity and promoting University programs without express permission from the Senior Student Affairs Officer or their designee. ** Please Note: Any violation of these directives will lead to further/harsher sanctioning.

It is your right to appear personally before Dr. Salvador B. Mena, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, or his designee, within two (2) working days to discuss the following issues only:

- (a) the reliability of the information concerning your alleged misconduct; and
- (b) whether the conduct and surrounding circumstances reasonably indicate that there is no potential threat or danger to community members by the activity or organization.

If you wish to exercise this right you may contact Dr. Mena's office to arrange an appointment by calling [REDACTED]

It will be the Vice Chancellor's decision either to affirm or to alter the interim suspension of activity based on this meeting. If the interim suspension is affirmed, an investigation will be conducted and a University Hearing will be scheduled if necessary. If the decision is altered, the interim suspension will end, although the original charges will not be dropped.

I trust that you understand the seriousness and urgency with which the University regards this situation and that you will behave accordingly. Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss any aspect of the University's disciplinary process.

Sincerely,



SJP

October 8 · Instagram · 🌐

The western media will continue to portray this as "terrorism" but this is a response to over 70 years of ongoing occupation, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and apartheid. We will continue to be the voice for the thousands of children, women, and men who have been silenced and killed. The Palestinian struggle is not anti-semitic, rather, a struggle against Israeli zionists; a struggle to exist. We stand in solidarity with our Palestinian people.

"They would rather die on their feet, then be living on their knees."

- Former President, [@lealishalabi](#)

And as always, free Palestine 🇵🇸



← National SJP

Message Us 🔍



👍❤️ 5

👍 5 💬 ➦ 2



National SJP

Jan 23 · 🌐



We've received a number of questions regarding conference! Please DM us with any questions should you have any!



❤️ 1

👍 1 💬 ➦



National SJP

Jan 17 · 🌐



From: Kamoutsas, Stasi <Stasi.Kamoutsas@eog.myflorida.com>

Sent: Monday, November 27, 2023 2:48 PM

To: Rodrigues, Ray <Ray.Rodrigues@flbog.edu>

Subject: Concerning Allegations at USF

Please see the attached.

Anastasios Kamoutsas
Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis

Please note that under Florida law correspondence sent to the Governor's Office, which is not confidential or exempt pursuant to chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes, is a public record made available upon request.

Impact Statement

I was raised by a Holocaust survivor. I have always been aware of the fact that I am a Jew. However, I did not become *painfully* aware until I started at The University of South Florida. My very first week of college in the Spring of 2021 was one I will never forget. A group of students from my dorm hallway were getting to know each other for the first time. When we were talking about family, I mentioned that my sister lived in Tel Aviv. One of the students then went on a tirade about how the hotels and buildings of the Tel Aviv skyline were created on stolen land that pushed out innocent Palestinians. From that night on, I knew my journey to become unapologetically Jewish was going to be an uphill battle.

The following spring semester, Spring of 2022, a Jewish fraternity pledge had a swastika drawn on the side of his head. As a member of a Greek organization myself, I was paralyzed in fear. The university responded abhorrently, with the only repercussion being that the fraternity was suspended for a semester. The student who committed the hate crime was not kicked out of the university and the incident was swept under the rug. Spring of 2023 was no better. I was made aware of an incident involving 2 other fraternities in which a Jewish student was beaten up and called a kike during an intramural game. Instead of the perpetrator being punished, the Jewish student's fraternity was punished and barred from playing intramural games from then on. In the days that followed, I saw his bruised face and broken spirit with my own eyes. It was then that I truly knew the university administration was more concerned with protecting its reputation than its Jewish students.

October 7th, 2023 is a day that will forever be ingrained into the minds of every Jew around the world. It was the day my dwindling false sense of security as a Jew living on an American college campus was shattered. The incessant social media posts from my peers and campus organizations depicted the worst of humanity. There were videos of my peers chanting and celebrating the vilest massacre of my people since the Holocaust. In the coming weeks, there were non-stop protests on and around the USF Tampa campus. There were days I couldn't go to my classes, access the library, or walk through the center of campus in fear of being recognized and harassed.

On October 11th, 2023 I was at Hillel when we were evacuated for a potential bomb threat. It was chaotic, stressful, and traumatizing, to say the least. Here I was, sitting in my safe space, grieving and trying to process my friends and family being shipped off to war when an officer who was in the building for an unrelated matter urged everyone to get out immediately. My peers were crying as we jumped into cars and drove away from the facility. When the building was cleared and we were permitted back in, I very plainly told the officer "Officer, I do not want you to think we cried wolf." He assured me he did not think this in the slightest and that he deemed the threat credible at the time. Three hours later, a statement via email was released by USFPD advising the USF community of what had happened. I was bothered by the line that stated "All occupants were allowed to return to the building and normal activities resumed." To me, this just told over 50,000 USF students where the Jews on campus were gathering, making us even more visible. I gave USFPD the benefit of the doubt, until, 4 hours later, a second statement was released that said "Police have now determined that there was never a legitimate threat made about a USF facility or to anyone in the university community. It

was a misunderstanding between two individuals who were conversing on social media and no crime was committed.” This was a stab in the back and gut-wrenching. Were my Jewish peers and I not part of the USF community?

Later that evening, I went to the police station with a staff member and peer who were with me in the building earlier that day. The officers were dismissive, cold, and placed the blame on the university’s communications department. One of the officers waited for our accompanying staff member to leave the room before rudely asking us “well, what would you have wanted us to say instead?”. We told her we didn’t know, but that because of their words, we were now being called liars, morons, and more. What made it all the worse was that the Communications Department Head and President Rhea Law’s Chief of Staff had visited us earlier that day, reassuring us that they would be there and support us during this difficult time. Our administrators, who exist to protect and advocate for us, ended up putting the biggest targets on our backs, but this was only just the beginning.

On October 18th, 2023, the police report from the aforementioned incident was released. Since USFPD claimed that “there was never a credible threat” and that “nobody from the USF community was ever in danger”, the personal information of every single individual was released. This included home addresses, driver’s license numbers, DOBs, and more, all because we were not classified as victims. Therefore, anyone with a case number can walk into the USF Police Department and request said report. In Gen Z terms, this would be considered “doxing” which is “the action or process of searching for and publishing private or identifying information about a particular individual on the internet, typically with malicious intent (Oxford

Languages).” But I guess since it is from the police department, all I get to call it is “following protocol”.

The University of South Florida claims to be committed to protecting free speech. However, at what point does it stop becoming free speech and start becoming hate speech and harassment? I’ve found “FREE PALESTINE” written on the desk I sit at in the lecture hall. I’ve had the entrances to classrooms covered in posters that say “FROM THE RIVER TO THE SEA, PALESTINE WILL BE FREE”, which is a call for the ethnic cleansing of the Jewish people. At both our Candle Vigil and Jewish Joy Shabbat events, we’ve had people waving Palestinian flags, blasting Arabic music, and screaming obscenities as an intimidation tactic. We’re not allowed to grieve, we’re not allowed to celebrate, but based on the university’s response, or lack thereof, we’re definitely allowed to live in fear.

After much contemplation, I have decided to pull my graduate application to the University of South Florida. I have been ostracized by members of my own sorority, my peers, the university administration, and the police department. I have been insulted, invalidated, gaslit, and endangered by the very people who took oaths, and are PAID, to keep us safe. The antisemitic history of this university didn’t start with Dr. Sami Al-Arian, who was indicted on terrorism charges two decades ago, or even with Ramadan Abdullah Mohammed Shalah, who was a USF adjunct professor that was later found to be a Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader, and it won’t end within my college career. Antisemitism is deeply rooted in the culture of this institution and will take years to extract. The real question is, will the University of South Florida wait for us to bleed Red, instead of Green and Gold, in order to save us?

Impact Statement

When I first started school at USF in 2020, I expected to be in a safe and accepting place for Jews. I wasn't involved in Jewish student organizations on campus during my freshman year, nor was I exposed to anything antisemitic due to Covid restrictions. This all changed during my second year. In my second year at USF, I rushed the fraternity **Redacted**, and became an active attendee of events at USF Hillel and Chabad at USF. These organizations gave me a safe place to practice my Judaism and meet others in the Jewish community. I continued to feel safe at USF until an incident occurred in Spring 2022. In another fraternity, a Jewish student had a swastika drawn on his head as part of a pledging experience. This was then reported to USF and the news, and there were expected to be serious consequences. After this happened, many antisemitic posts happened on Greekrank.com, a website commonly used to post about the different Greek organizations at USF anonymously. USF then released a statement saying that antisemitism had no place at USF. This statement reassured me that USF was going to try and rectify the situation and protect the Jews on USF's campus. Instead, I learned that the only action USF was taking for the incident was to suspend the fraternity for the remainder of the semester. On top of the punishment being held to only a suspension for one semester, the USF police department went so far as to say that it was "not currently investigating any hate crimes to the Jewish community because we do not have a victim." This statement was extremely disturbing. In what world is drawing a swastika, a symbol representative of the mass genocide of 6 million Jews and upwards of 3 million people in other groups acceptable? The world that is perpetuated by the USF administration. The definition of a hate crime, according to The United

States Department of Justice, is a “crime committed on the basis on the basis of the victim’s perceived or actual race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or disability” (<https://www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/learn-about-hate-crimes>). USF blatantly allowed a hate crime to occur on its campus without punishment, going so far as to have USFPD say that there was no victim in this event. Hazing is a crime in Florida, and drawing a swastika on a Jewish student’s head very clearly has bias present as well as a victim. I was absolutely devastated when I heard that USF wasn’t going to punish the offender with anything except for a fraternity suspension. This is not the only time during my enrollment that USF has failed to support their Jewish students’ safety either. In Spring of 2023, one of my Jewish fraternity brothers was pushed to the ground during an IM game that was almost over (it was 7-2 and no longer competitive), and called a dirty jew. As he was getting up, a student on the other team punched him on the jaw. The Jewish student, [Redacted], then proceeded to try to leave the situation and was then called a Jewish slur: “kyke.” Upon reporting this incident to both USFPD and USF, my fraternity and [Redacted] were punished by being suspended from Intramurals. This further confirmed for me that USF was not looking to protect its Jewish students but to bury situations and avoid anything related to legal or serious action. As someone who enjoyed participating in Intramural sports, I was upset to hear that USF was preventing us from playing in Intramurals because of the antisemitic actions of a member of the other team. It is not protecting Jewish students to suspend them from participating in activities that other students are welcome to participate in. As a friend of [Redacted], I had to witness him spiral for months after USF took action against him, the victim, rather than the offender. Again, USF pretended to stand with their Jewish students when in reality they were just trying to keep

themselves in the clear. After more intense conflicts broke out in the Israel-Palestine conflict, tensions on campus began to rise. A week and a half ago from the time of writing this statement, I was pulling into USF Hillel's parking lot when a student inside the USF Hillel building received a bomb threat. I was quickly turned away by Redacted and USFPD with no explanation of what occurred for over an hour and a half. Upon finding out that there was a bomb threat to the building that I was about to be in, I was devastated. I instantly broke into tears, absolutely inconsolable. For there to be a bomb threat on USF's campus was something that I could not even process. This campus that was supposed to be safe was again experiencing another antisemitic incident. After the building was cleared and made certain that there was not a bomb in the building, USFPD released a statement on October 11 at 3:38 pm saying that they found nothing in the building explaining that there was a social media threat about a bomb. Then, 4 hours later at 7:26 pm, USFPD released another statement saying that there was "never a legitimate threat made" and that it was a "misunderstanding between two individuals on social media and that no crime was committed." Upon hearing about this, I was filled with a mix of emotions: dismay, sadness, anger, but most of all, sheer terror. Something was clearly wrong. Again, another antisemitic incident happened, and again, USF was trying to slide it under the rug to protect its sterling image. I found it very strange that USFPD released a statement admitting that there was a threat made on social media that had enough credibility for them to sweep a building, just to release another statement three hours later saying that it was all a misunderstanding. Every single time I step on the USF campus, I am scared. I have been forced to live in absolute terror every single time I step onto campus. I no longer wear my star of David necklace in fear that someone will see it and harass me, or worse resort to

physical violence just for it to become another scandal that USF sweeps under the rug rather than making an effort to protect its Jewish students. I no longer feel safe or protected as a USF student. USF, the place that I am expected to be provided with safety as a student of, is no longer, and may have never been, a safe haven for Jews. Regardless of how other student groups may feel about Jews, USF has an obligation to protect its students from religious persecution. During my time at USF it has failed at this time and time again. I am currently applying to medical schools and decided not to send in a secondary application to USF Morsani College of Medicine because I no longer trust USF to provide me protection as a student and as a Jewish individual. After I graduate this December, I will be moving away from the USF area as well for similar reasons. USF as an institution has failed to prevent institutionalized antisemitism and failed to keep its Jewish population safe. If a Jewish middle or high schooler were to ask me how I like USF and whether I would recommend applying there, I would tell them no. I would tell them that going to USF as a Jew is willingly putting yourself in a situation in which you have to live in fear of physical violence and harassment. I would tell them that even in a situation in which you, as a Jew, were to be attacked by another individual, regardless of the motive behind the attack, USF administration would do everything in their power, not to protect you, but to make sure that the situation gets buried and that there are no consequences to the offender. I would tell the high schooler that even though USF is supposed to be an organization that protects all those that are members of it, it fails time and time again to protect Jewish students from physical harm and verbal abuse, and constantly delegitimizing any serious concern that Jewish students may bring up to them.

Student Impact Statement

To be a Jew on this campus is to live a hundred lives. In one of them, I wake up every day and choose not to wear my Star of David, in fear of the consequences. I don't know if all I would get is a dirty look, or if I would be verbally or physically assaulted. In this life, I hold my breath at every 'Free Palestine' rally flier, and I keep my head down as I walk to class or to work. In another life, I have lost friends, I no longer feel safe in my own room. I have been in the dorms less and less, trying desperately to find a place on campus where I feel as though I can exhale.

Every time I open social media, I ache. People I know and once cared for incredibly deeply spread misinformation that contributes to the screaming for the absolute inhalation of Israel and of my people. In one life, I am in a bomb threat in my only Jewish space, and in another, I finish an assignment. The day of the bomb threat, I was wearing a t-shirt I had just got from the concert I had gone to the night before, one I had looked forward to for almost six months, and now each day I rummage through my closet trying to put off wearing that again. I remember a lot from that day, but the thing that stays with me most was the heartbeat pulsing in my throat when we were evacuated from the building. It rattled me and it calmed me, the only constant in such an alarming moment.

Though our Hillel having a bomb threat was absolutely terrifying, what scared me more was the aftermath. I couldn't open snapchat without seeing someone calling us liars, I couldn't face my friends and ask for empathy when the police department had issued such dismissive statements, I couldn't trust the people who have been hired by the school to protect us. I couldn't trust the school themselves. Our administration has been violently apathetic to the feelings of Jewish students and have put their own ulterior motives above us. When we ask for a condemnation of the raging antisemitism on campus, we don't think we are asking for much.

We just want to feel as though we are loved. Right now, that only comes from our staff and our peers at Hillel. In this life, I am grateful for them, but in another I am sad that they are all I have.

I did not grow up in a space like this. I grew up being the only Jew in my year group. One of a handful in my entire school. I had dealt with antisemitism online and in books, in a history class as I saw propaganda created by a group we had collectively determined to be evil. I now see those same images and words outside the place I used to get my coffee and it's labeled 'social justice'. I don't think I'm desensitized, I just think I choose to not feel anything, because if I didn't, I may never feel safe again. I can't do it. It's not fair that we cannot get the degree we are paying for without being interrupted while grieving at a vigil, or having someone scream "Free Palestine" skating past an event we hosted to distract us and uplift our joy.

In another life, I am stronger. I fight hard and I don't let anyone get in my way. I stand up for my people. In this life, I try my hardest, but I am just twenty. I try while I forget to fill in timesheets and I submit an essay late. I try while my friends tell me I have grown distant and I do not tell them it is because I can't look at them anymore without seeing someone who is adding to the rhetoric that gets the people I love hurt, and others like us killed. In another life, I am visible Jewish in all spaces, I have an administration that cares deeply for my community, I am loved by many and they are loved by me. In this life, I lie awake at night and cry. My great grandparents would cry for me if they were still around to see what has become of our world. They would be thinking 'aren't we past this?'. And I wish I could assure them and myself that we are.

I block friends, I don't open apps without being afraid, I feel such Jewish joy in fleeting moments at Hillel and the next day I can't breathe without breaking down. We have been let down by

people being paid to protect us, time and time again. I live a hundred lives trying to be safe in just one.



Ashley Moody
Attorney General
PL-01 the Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Mark Glass
Commissioner
Florida Department of Law Enforcement
2331 Phillips Road
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dave Kerner
Executive Director
Florida Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
2900 Apalachee Parkway
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

MEMORANDUM

TO: Florida Law Enforcement Agencies

FROM: Attorney General Ashley Moody
Commissioner Mark Glass
Executive Director Dave Kerner

DATE: October 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Protecting Citizens and Visitors in the Wake of Terrorist Attacks Against Israel

On October 7, 2023, the nation of Israel was subject to sustained terrorist attacks perpetrated by members of Hamas, a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO). These deplorable acts of terror perpetrated against innocent Israeli citizens have no place in a civil and organized society.

All Florida law enforcement agencies and officials are encouraged to remain vigilant to ensure the safety of citizens and visitors to Florida as Israel defends itself from these heinous acts of aggression. In furtherance of this, please take time to refresh your familiarity with § 775.33, Florida Statutes, § 784.0493, Florida Statutes, § 806.13, Florida Statutes, and § 810.098, Florida Statutes.

Section 775.33 makes it a first-degree felony to provide “material support or resources” to a designated FTO, including Hamas. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Attorney General’s Office have created guidelines for law enforcement investigations conducted pursuant to this section available via secure link on CJNET.

Please note that providing material support does not encompass protected First Amendment speech and generally requires a showing of substantial and tangible support to a designated FTO including but not limited to:

- Providing donations, fundraising, or providing other financial support to terrorist actors or an FTO.
- Engaging in a conspiracy to assist an FTO in moving illicit items for their benefit or engaging in a conspiracy to obtain weapons for an FTO.
- Pledging support to an FTO and offering the organization services such as training or on-call medical services for wounded organization members.
- Providing oneself to an FTO as “personnel” and taking such steps as buying combat gear or traveling overseas to join the FTO.
- Conspiring to provide oneself as “personnel” to commit a terrorist attack on an FTO’s behalf by seeking to transmit an oath of loyalty to the FTO, while also collecting funds for, and planning an operation regarding, a terrorist attack.

Sections 784.0493, 806.13, and 810.098 were signed into law by Governor DeSantis on May 1, 2023. These laws prohibit the willful and malicious harassing or intimidating of another person based on the person’s wearing or displaying an indicia relating to religious or ethnic heritage and provide further protections for persons on a state university or Florida College System institution. The Florida Department of Law Enforcement has provided detailed guidance on these laws through a memo that is available via secure link on CJNET.

The State of Florida will not tolerate violence against citizens of Israel, members of the Jewish community, or any other person in the State based on their religious or ethnic heritage. Any law enforcement officer considering charging a suspect under the statutes discussed above should consult his/her legal advisor.



Manny Diaz, Jr.
Commissioner
Florida Department of Education
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1514
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Ray Rodrigues
Chancellor
State University of Florida
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

MEMORANDUM

TO: State University System Presidents
Florida College System Presidents

FROM: Chancellor Ray Rodrigues
Commissioner Manny Diaz

DATE: October 9, 2023

SUBJECT: Legal Obligations to Protect Jewish Students

This weekend, the world watched Hamas, an Iran-backed terrorist organization, commit a barbaric attack against Israel including innocent Israeli women, children, babies, and grandparents who were Holocaust survivors. Israel not only has the right to defend itself against these heinous attacks, but it has a duty to respond with overwhelming force. Florida unequivocally stands with Israel and the Jewish people during this difficult moment in history.

Over the last four years, Governor DeSantis, the Florida Legislature, the Board of Governors, and the Florida Department of Education have aggressively implemented policies to ensure that Jewish students, employees, and communities are protected from discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and violence. We are directing our institutions to take immediate, aggressive steps to ensure that all faculty and staff are aware of their legal obligations to ensure that Jewish Floridians are protected during this time.

In 2019, Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law [House Bill 741](#) which set specific requirements for K-20 public educational institutions in dealing with discrimination against Jewish students and employees. The law recognizes discrimination motivated by anti-Semitism as discrimination based on race and includes specific examples of discriminatory conduct. It added religion as a protected class with regard to discrimination against students and employees and requires a public K-20 educational institution to treat discrimination by students or employees or resulting from institutional policies motivated by anti-Semitism in an identical manner to discrimination

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motivated by race. Pursuant to § 1000.05, Florida Statutes, forms of anti-Semitism that may constitute discrimination on the basis of race include:

1. Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews, often in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
2. Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as a collective, especially, but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
3. Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, the State of Israel, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
4. Accusing Jews as a people or the State of Israel of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
5. Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interest of their own nations.

Anti-Semitic conduct also includes conduct related to Israel, such as:

1. Demonizing Israel by using the symbols and images associated with classic anti-Semitism to characterize Israel or Israelis, drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis, or blaming Israel for all inter-religious or political tensions.
2. Applying a double standard to Israel by requiring behavior of Israel that is not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation, or focusing peace or human rights investigations only on Israel.
3. Delegitimizing Israel by denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination and denying Israel the right to exist.

Florida law requires educational institutions ensure that all education programs, activities and opportunities are offered free from discrimination on the basis of race and national origin. This includes ensuring that Jewish students can participate in all educational programs and activities free from discrimination and in a safe environment free from intimidation, harassment, threats, and physical violence. This guidance is important to reaffirm given the anti-Semitic, pro-Hamas student groups preparing to hold events on campuses. Educational institutions must fully protect Jewish students from any anti-Semitic discrimination and physical attacks and make it clear anyone who violates the law will be punished to the fullest extent of the law.

In addition to fulfilling their obligations under § 1000.05, Florida Statutes, educational institutions should be aware of recent statutory changes that provide more tools to local law enforcement agencies to ensure safeguards and protect Jewish students and communities across our state.

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On April 28, 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis signed [House Bill 269](#) to establish stronger criminal penalties for committing certain anti-Semitic crimes.

§ 784.0493, Florida Statutes, was created to prohibit harassment or intimidation based on religious or ethnic heritage and states: (2) A person may not willfully and maliciously harass or intimidate another person based on the person's wearing or displaying of any indicia relating to any religious or ethnic heritage. (3) A person who violates subsection (2) commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 80 775.082 or s. 775.083. (4) A person who violates subsection (2), and in the course of committing the violation makes a credible threat to the person who is the subject of the harassment or intimidation, commits a felony of the third degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082, s. 775.083, or s. 775.084. (5) A violation of this section is considered a hate crime for purposes of the reporting requirements of s. 877.19.

Additionally, § 810.098, Florida Statutes, was created to prohibit trespassing for the purpose of threatening or intimidating another person. Specifically, the new law states: (1)(a) Whoever, without being authorized, licensed, or invited, willfully enters the campus of a state university or Florida College System institution for the purpose of threatening or intimidating another person, and is warned by the state university or Florida College System institution to depart and refuses to do so, commits a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083. (b) If the penalty for a violation of this subsection is reclassified under s. 775.085, such a violation is considered a hate crime for purposes of the reporting requirements of s. 877.19.

Florida law enforcement recently arrested four individuals pursuant to the recent changes in statute under HB 269.

The State of Florida will not tolerate anti-Semitic violence, intimidation, harassment, or threats against Jewish students, employees, or communities. It is important to also emphasize that Hamas is a designated terrorist organization. And under § 775.33, Florida Statutes, it is a first-degree felony for any person to provide material support or resources to Hamas, or any designated foreign terrorist organization. Any individual or student organization providing support to support or resources to Hamas, or any designated foreign terrorist organization will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Educational institutions have an obligation to ensure that acts of anti-Semitism are thoroughly investigated and handled appropriately, as acts of discrimination, and that appropriate action is taken to ensure discriminatory conduct does not continue. Our agencies will spare no

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resources to ensure Florida institutions uphold their commitment to protect and safeguard Jewish students and faculty.

The staff at the Board of Governors and the Florida Department of Education are prepared to assist if you have any questions or if you need technical assistance to ensure that your institutions are in compliance with these significant provisions of the law.

From: Sharon Richman <sharon.richman@gmail.com>

Sent: Friday, December 15, 2023 7:07 PM

To: Chancellor, Board of Governors <Chancellor@flbog.edu>; Rodrigues, Ray <Ray.Rodrigues@flbog.edu>

Cc: McDermott, Shannon <Shannon.McDermott@flbog.edu>; Mohapatra, Prasant <pmohapatra@usf.edu>; Commissioner <commissioner@fldoe.org>; amanda.phalin@warrington.ufl.edu <amanda.phalin@warrington.ufl.edu>; bill@weatherfordfirm.com <bill@weatherfordfirm.com>; sg-president@usf.edu <sg-president@usf.edu>; sg-vicepresident@usf.edu <sg-vicepresident@usf.edu>; action@endjewhatred.com <action@endjewhatred.com>

Subject: Addressing Pervasive Jew-hatred at University of South Florida

To be addressed to the Florida Board of Governors,

I am emailing to bring your attention to the disturbing instances of antisemitism faced by Jewish students at University of South Florida (USF). Both the End Jew Hatred movement and Mothers Against Campus Antisemitism are collectively raising deep concerns about USF's response to Jew-hatred on campus. Following the brutality and inhumane atrocities incited by the terrorist organization Hamas on October 7th, the climate has intensified and frightened Jewish students to a horrifying degree that we have not seen since the Palestinian Islamic Jihad campus controversy.

<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2003%2FUS%2FSouth%2F02%2F20%2Fprofessor.arrest%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40flbog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjo iMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6Ikk1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LnN4P0ESNRHqy3u sI3us6CaxL8bgQ%2FUIm%2FGNTQgkADU%3D&reserved=0>

Our movements have observed an alarming increase in student testimonies and reports on campus, many of which the USF's administration has dangerously overlooked. While President Rhea Law's official statement condemns Hamas and pledges intolerance for violence, discrimination, or harassment, we have not witnessed practical application when students have reported incidents out of fear for their safety.

On top of this, we have seen multiple student groups on campus warmly embrace Hamas' war crimes against Israelis which includes: the kidnapping of hostages, rape, mutilation, and murder. Many of Florida's federal elected officials have viewed the horrific footage that Hamas shockingly, and proudly paraded. The Board of Governors is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the operation of the state's public universities. USF's negligence in responsibly addressing these reports is a critical violation of the university's code of conduct, and thus, we believe immediate change is necessary, which is why we urgently call upon the Board's immediate intervention into the university's handling of Jew-hatred, with a full public statement acknowledging the experiences of traumatized Jewish students as well as a clear action plan to address this problem.

On October 8th, the day after Hamas carried out the massacre at Re'im Music Festival, the USF Students for Justice in Palestine chapter posted an image

(<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2Fp%2FCyKDYA8stXW%2F%3Fhl%3Den&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fbog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLjQlQjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6I1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=RKQhZfsPb6iGGDKcpQD8UeCq2tRfbf1OhOAdYpvCc%2FQ%3D&reserved=0>) on their official instagram page justifying Hamas' actions with their caption libelously stating "The Western media will continue to portray this as 'terrorism', but this is a response to over 70 years of ongoing occupation, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and apartheid." As the number of Israeli hostages increased, along with the death toll, a statement

(<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2Fp%2FCyjUz82p0z5%2F%3Fhl%3Den&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fbog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLjQlQjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6I1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=6%2BB9H9q2vwau7fowQqW1XeNwLNRvM2XSnBOwDNBFkn0%3D&reserved=0>) followed ten days later continuing the chapter's support for Hamas' terror campaign.

On October 11th, the day after the USF Hillel held a peaceful vigil

(<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.usforacle.com%2F2023%2F11%2F08%2Fwe-are-scared-jewish-students-feel-unsafe-amid-israel-palestine-conflict%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fbog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLjQlQjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6I1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=LjzGZXYrDtKCbKpW9BeZS4I3NkFKdjkilgeWG%2BUymo%3D&reserved=0>) for all the lives lost on both sides of this conflict, which was disrupted by pro-Palestinian students shouting dehumanizing slurs and blasting music through their cars, Hillel reported a targeted bomb threat

(<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.usforacle.com%2F2023%2F10%2F11%2FUniversity-police-investigates-bomb-threat-to-usf-hillel%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fbog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLjQlQjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6I1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=8PI5CY9om630ecyXfrieXU3Vbe7rW3VpqqGc4Yv0upl%3D&reserved=0>) made by a student on social media, which was deemed credible leading to USF Police evacuating the Hillel building. However, USF police later invalidated the Jewish students' fears by claiming that the bomb threat was a "misunderstanding" and "never a threat to the USF community".

The university never imposed consequences against the student, and Jewish students have gone on record to express their feelings of betrayal by the university. Despite the news of the bomb threat spreading across the campus student body, the campus organization Students for Socialism organized an anti-Israel rally

(<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.wfla.com%2Fnews%2Flocal-news%2Fwe-are-scared-pro-palestine-rally-held-at-usf-some-jewish-students-feel-unsafe%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fbog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLjQlQjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6I1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=8PI5CY9om630ecyXfrieXU3Vbe7rW3VpqqGc4Yv0upl%3D&reserved=0>)

[CJQIjoic2luMzliLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=YwjuZ2El6cqyvj4ZkOMGLJPujNxBmeheCnS11EUWl%3D&reserved=0](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbaynews9.com%2Ffl%2Ftampa%2Fnews%2F2023%2F10%2F27%2Fpro-palestinian-movement-conference-planned-at-usf-tonight-amid-backlash&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fblog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoic4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoic2luMzliLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5HICy2Bz6E%2BZjLOSqAoGXwD1yLBGMKyQpQw%2BHcoRM4%3D&reserved=0)) on campus the very next day, one of many throughout the month of October, and even continued their Jew-hatred through their pre-planned BDS Conference (<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fbaynews9.com%2Ffl%2Ftampa%2Fnews%2F2023%2F10%2F27%2Fpro-palestinian-movement-conference-planned-at-usf-tonight-amid-backlash&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fblog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoic4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoic2luMzliLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5HICy2Bz6E%2BZjLOSqAoGXwD1yLBGMKyQpQw%2BHcoRM4%3D&reserved=0>) on October 27th.

On November 14th, Students for Socialism in conjunction with the Students for Justice in Palestine chapter and various anti-Israel groups organized (https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.instagram.com%2Fp%2FCzb-lyZRAsg%2F%3Fimg_index%3D1&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fblog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoic4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoic2luMzliLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2B10waZjCzX14RZKcRmZgdUCX%2BTGEim%2BDKWga2Aemy8c%3D&reserved=0) a “Tear Down the Apartheid Wall” demonstration outside the Marshall Student Center which included signs (<https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Ftwitter.com%2FTampaBaySDS%2Fstatus%2F1724560196096143483&data=05%7C02%7Cchancellor%40fblog.edu%7C4d9718dc0b354e204c3f08dbfdbcb0576%7C63bf107bcb6f41738c1c1406bb5cb794%7C0%7C0%7C638382820672455174%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoic4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoic2luMzliLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2BEGPhLwHlOYcBPjumumhF4BCTRLGaSS4XmNas00%2FMxo%3D&reserved=0>) displaying “from the river to the sea”, an explicit call for genocide against Jews from the Jordanian River to the Mediterranean Sea. The large display, which seemingly violates USF rules regarding protests, was permitted by the administration. There has been no attempt from USF to distance the institution from this slogan that has been used as a rallying cry for violence from internationally recognized terrorist groups such as Hamas and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PLFP).

After the shameful December 5th Congressional hearing from the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, are we to believe that USF is taking the same position as the presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn? This is a question you must all ask yourselves, especially after President Rhea Law went on record the day before the viral hearing stating that the university is “committed to safeguarding the First Amendment rights of all of the members of our community, while at the same time making clear that the groups and the individuals exercising those rights do not speak for our university and USF does not endorse the content of their speech.” The crucial query remains unanswered: why has President Rhea Law not taken proactive measures to hold accountable those student groups whose expressions may not align with the university's values?

USF's mishandling of Jew-hatred demands urgent attention and intervention from the Florida Board of Governors. The recent statements made by President Rhea Law, while acknowledging the commitment to safeguarding First Amendment rights, have left a concerning gap when it comes to addressing instances of Jew hatred on campus. It is imperative that the Florida Board of Governors take decisive action to formally push out a robust condemnation of Jew-hatred, to take this fight public, and impose consequences on those responsible on campus for its escalation on campus, from student groups to the administration. The board should actively work towards implementing comprehensive measures to hold accountable those responsible for promoting hatred against any religious or ethnic group.

We cannot tell you, and do not profess to know, how to run your schools to eradicate these fatal flaws. But unless we hear from you before December 22nd, we will assume there is no such plan underway. Please direct your response to Gerard Filitti, gerard@thelawfareproject.org.

Sincerely,

Mothers Against College Antisemitism (MACA) is a movement consisting of mothers, parents, grandparents, family members, and friends, committed to advocating against the state of increasing antisemitism on college campuses in the United States and Canada.

#EndJewHatred is a non-partisan international grassroots civil rights movement that unites ordinary people, activists, and organizations from around the world who support the cause that defines the movement: to end Jew-hatred in our lifetime.

Best,
Sharon Richman
Lake Worth, Florida
561-693-6447

DAY OF RESISTANCE TOOLKIT

INTRODUCTION

National Students for Justice in Palestine is calling for a **national day of resistance** on college campuses across occupied Turtle Island and internationally this **Thursday, October 12th, 2023**

On the 50th anniversary of the 1973 war, the resistance in Gaza launched a surprise operation against the Zionist enemy which disrupted the very foundation of Zionist settler society. On the morning of October 8th, the Palestinian resistance stormed the illegitimate border fence, gaining control of the Gaza checkpoint at Erez, and re-entering 1948 Palestine. Referred to as Operation *Towfan Al-Aqsa* (Al-Aqsa Flood), the resistance has taken occupation soldiers hostage, fired thousands of rockets, taken over Israeli military vehicles, and gained control over illegal Israeli settlements. In the West Bank, the Palestinian resistance has called for collective action by the Palestinian masses amidst attempts by the Zionist entity to lock-up the West Bank. The Palestinian resistance has called for mass protests in every Palestinian city, and Palestinian workers have called for a general strike. In Gaza, Israel has launched an onslaught of airstrikes. As of Sunday, Oct 8th at 12pm ET, Israel has murdered 320 Palestinians and left over 2200 others injured. Despite this, our people choose resistance over negotiated cages on our homeland. Fearlessly, our people struggle for complete liberation and return.

Today, we witness a historic win for the Palestinian resistance: across land, air, and sea, our people have broken down the artificial barriers of the Zionist entity, taking with it the facade of an impenetrable settler colony and reminding each of us that total return and liberation to Palestine is near. As the Palestinian student movement, we have an unshakable responsibility to join the call for mass mobilization.

National liberation is near— glory to our resistance, to our martyrs, and to our steadfast people.

JOIN THE DAY OF RESISTANCE NATIONAL CALL-IN MEETING

- On Monday, October 9th @ 5:00 PT/ 7:00 CT/ 8:00 ET, we will be hosting a national call-in meeting to meet with chapters, talk through the political significance of this moment, talk through how-to's for the protest day of action and troubleshoot any support needed. Please RSVP here: <https://forms.gle/AbK7RmidTRPYVcAfA>

CALL TO ACTION: NATIONAL DAY OF RESISTANCE

- On Thursday, October 12th, National Students for Justice in Palestine is calling for a national day of resistance from the student movement for Palestine liberation on college campuses across occupied Turtle Island (so-called US and Canada) and beyond. We must continue to resist directly through dismantling Zionism, and wielding the political power that our organizations hold on our campuses and in our communities. We are asking chapters to host demonstrations on campus/in their

community in support of our resistance in Palestine and the national liberation struggle — one which they play a critical role in actualizing.

- Please fill out this brief form to let us know what events you will be hosting! These will be posted and publicized on our social media – filling out this form will help us better coordinate and unify nationally as a student movement
<https://forms.gle/H7ugKuVL22AAtzUZA>
- Please upload any pictures or videos that you are comfortable with us sharing here!
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1r4_5Ugt9eocMgvqm2J7FXlxRGTyovXBJ

We will also be having a “how to organize a protest,” including roles, security, media training, and more, on the National Call-in meeting on Monday, Oct 9th at 8pm ET. The presentation + resources shared will be added to the tool-kit following the presentation.

If you need additional help organizing or planning your protest, please reach out to [National Students for Justice in Palestine](#). (RSVP link above).

If a protest is not possible, engagement across the movement — whether it be a sit-in, disruption, or educational event — is highly encouraged!

Other ways to participate

1. Table/Flyer on campus
 - a. Challenging Zionist hegemony and popularizing our resistance is a critical part of advancing our national movement! Print flyers to put up around your campus. We encourage you to use any of the graphics linked in this toolkit. [Here](#) is a Tabling 101, and for examples of tabling materials, click [here](#) and [here](#). For some tips on how to table and how to respond to common Zionist arguments, click [here](#)
2. Teach-ins
 - a. Make sure people on your campus know what's happening in Palestine, and are armed with a framework which advances national liberation— host a teach-in on your campus! We will include a teach-in during the National Call-in meeting – please attend for inspiration. We will also be linking the presentation in the toolkit following the call-in meeting.
3. Sign onto statement from Bears for Palestine
 - a. We welcome both individual and organizational endorsements onto this statement by Berkeley Bears for Palestine in unwavering support of the Palestinian resistance
 - b. [Towfan Al-Aqsa Statement](#) – Bears for Palestine
4. Write a local statement of solidarity
 - a. Statements of support show a cohesive and united movement. Work with other organizations on your campus to put out a joint statement expressing your campus' support for Palestine.
5. Share within your network/region:
 - a. If you're near other SJPs, let them know what you're planning! If you're in close geographic proximity to one another, you may be able to plan a joint action.
6. Help spread the word by sharing widely on your campuses and in your communities
 - a. Contact student organizations across movements to share your action on social media. Engage your community, and let everyone know that the student movement on occupied Turtle Island stands firmly in support of Palestinian resistance.

MESSAGING & FRAMING

For over 75 years, our Palestinian people, through steadfast resistance, have waged a prolonged war for liberation and return to our colonized homeland. What we are witnessing now is a heightened stage of the Palestinian struggle—through tearing down colonial infrastructure and liberating our colonized land from illegal settlements and military checkpoints, our people are actualizing revolution. Palestine will be liberated from the river to the sea, and our resistance, through their bravery and love for land, continue to bring dignity and honor to the Palestinian people. As the diaspora-based student movement for Palestine liberation, our responsibility is to not only support, but struggle alongside our people back home. The forces of Zionism engage in media campaigns which attack our people and resistance from all sides— it is our responsibility, therefore, to break through their hegemonic narratives of “war” and “unprovoked aggression,” and instead ground our campuses and communities in a narrative which centers the legitimacy of resistance and the necessity of complete liberation. Please find below a breakdown of framework and important messaging which help contextualize, frame, and above all normalize and support our fearless resistance.

- **When people are occupied, resistance is justified — normalize the resistance.**
 - ◆ *The Palestinian people have the right to resist colonization and oppression.* The Palestinian people have the right to return to their homeland and free themselves from the complete land, air, and sea siege they've been subjected to; this requires resistance, and it is both morally just and politically necessary. These events are the natural and justified response to decades of oppression and dehumanization.
 - ◆ The fight for Palestinian liberation is a necessary struggle against an occupying and colonial state; not a “war” or “conflict.” It is a **struggle for national liberation.**
 - ◆ In the eyes of the West, there is no “right” way for Palestinians to fight for their freedom. Every tactic is met with repression.
 - ◆ The occupation, the day to day and the existence of Israel is not peaceful; there is no ‘maintaining the peace’ with a violent settler state.
 - ◆ Settlers are not “civilians” in the sense of international law, because they are military assets used to ensure continued control over stolen Palestinian land.
 - ◆ Responsibility for every single death falls solely on the Zionist entity. They do not care one bit for the Geneva Conventions but demand Palestinians follow them to the letter.
- **Gaza as the cradle of resistance**
 - ◆ *Gaza broke out of prison.* Resistance fighters captured one of the bulldozers used to destroy Palestinian homes, and used it to breach the illegitimate border fence back into '48 Palestine.
 - ◆ Gaza is being subject to collective punishment because the occupation knows liberation is inevitable.

- ◆ Zionists are telling Gazans to leave while also denying them freedom of movement—this is a call for genocide of Palestinians.
 - "I say to the residents of Gaza: Leave now because we will operate forcefully everywhere."--Netanyahu
- ◆ This is not "unprovoked". Apartheid, ethnic cleansing, indiscriminate bombing, arbitrary detention, destruction of infrastructure, 75 years of settler colonialism are provocations.
- **Liberation is material**
 - ◆ *Liberation is not an abstract concept.* It is not a moment circumscribed to a revolutionary past as it is often characterized. Rather, liberating colonized land is a real process that requires confrontation by any means necessary. In essence, decolonization is a call to action, a commitment to the restoration of Indigenous sovereignty. It calls upon us to engage in meaningful actions that go beyond symbolism and rhetoric. Resistance comes in all forms— armed struggle, general strikes, and popular demonstrations. All of it is legitimate, and all of it is necessary.
 - ◆ "You don't get freedom peacefully. Freedom is never safeguarded peacefully. Anyone who is depriving you of freedom isn't deserving of a peaceful approach by the ones who are deprived of their freedom."-Malcolm X
- **israel is fragile**
 - ◆ This action of resistance shatters the illusion of Israel as an impenetrable, indestructible entity. The Zionist entity is fragile, and Palestinian resistance is alive. The IOF are still in disarray and the resistance fighters are still launching new attacks into '48.
 - ◆ The Zionist entity built a massive technological barrier to imprison Gaza that the resistance neutralized in hours. They massively underestimated the ingenuity of the resistance, and will continue to do so.
 - ◆ Settlers are already fleeing the land, their 'dedication' to the settler colony is easily broken. The dedication of Palestinians for their national liberation is unshakable.
 - ◆ *From Rhodesia to South Africa to Algeria, no settler colony can hold out forever.*
- **Unity Intifada**
 - ◆ The revolution is being waged across historic Palestine— not just cross-factional, but unifying our people in the name of resistance
 - ◆ All Palestinian factions in Gaza appear to be participating under unified command.
 - ◆ *This is the first time since 1949 that a large-scale battle has been fought within '48 Palestine.*
- **We as Palestinian students in exile are PART of this movement, not in solidarity with this movement.**
 - ◆ *This is a moment of mobilization for all Palestinians. We must act as part of this movement. All of our efforts continue the work and resistance of Palestinians on the ground.*

HASHTAGS

- #studentdayofresistance
- #operationalaqsaftlood
- #nationalliberationisnear
- #dayofresistance

TEMPLATE GRAPHICS

[CANVA GRAPHIC TEMPLATE LINK FOR PROTESTS \[LINK WITH BELOW GRAPHICS\]](#)

TABLING MATERIALS AND OTHER GRAPHICS COMING SOON



NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION FOR PALESTINE

October 18th - 25th



Join students across Turtle Island for a week of action in solidarity with millions of Palestinians on the ground facing bombardment, genocide, and apartheid and to demand an end to the US-backed siege on Gaza.

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WEEK OF ACTION OVERVIEW

For over 16 years, Palestinians in Gaza have faced a complete land, air, and sea siege by Israel. The occupation has cut off access to life-saving resources, leaving 2.3 people without water, fuel, and the electricity that powers Gaza's sewage treatment and single power plant. Compounding the strain on an already stressed water treatment system and further restricting access to clean drinking water is an intentional strategy employed by the occupation, one that impacts the lives of millions of Palestinians every day. The current indiscriminate bombing campaign, use of internationally banned chemical weapons, targeting of schools and hospitals, and sealing of entryways/exits are all funded by the United States, giving 3.8 billion dollars a year to Israel's military. Make no mistake — Palestinians in Gaza are being collectively punished by the occupation, with full support of the U.S. All of our institutions, including our universities, must be pushed to take clear stances against colonization and ethnic cleansing. The blockade must be lifted, supplies must be allowed in, and people must be allowed to return home.

Every bomb Israel drops on Gaza our universities bankroll through massive investments in the world's largest arms manufacturers—namely, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, General Dynamics, and Elbit Systems. By funding the weapons used by Israel, our universities are **directly complicit** in the colonization and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. We, as student organizers for Palestine liberation, have the power to change that. By divesting from weapons manufacturers, we are able to place targeted pressure on weapons' manufacturers to cut partnerships with Israel. We demand our universities divest their endowments and other monetary investments from war profiteers who are directly responsible for the daily violence faced by Palestinians.

We call on students across the country to take action this week to stop the US-backed genocide in Gaza and force our universities to divest from weapons manufacturers which arm Israel's genocide in Gaza.

OUR DEMANDS

1. We demand an **immediate end** to Israel's siege on Gaza and the U.S. military funding to Israel.
2. We demand **our universities fully divest** from weapons' corporations which arm Israel's genocide in Gaza.

TAKE ACTION

As a **small group of activists**, a **chapter** or other **campus based group** →

- Gather your collaborators to plan an action on campus calling for an end to the siege on Gaza and to demand that your university fully divest from the weapons industry. See example action tactics in the [Appendix](#) of this document.
- Launch a petition or letter of demands to put public pressure on decision-makers to divest from weapons' corporations and end all partnerships and programs which normalize Israel's settler-colonial violence.
- Circulate social media graphics, flyers, and other forms of art propaganda to expose your university's complicity in the ongoing genocide in Palestine and to build support for your demands and calls to action.

As a **staff** or **faculty member** →

- Support actions being organized on campus by postponing class, and speak publicly in support of students/against student retaliation.
- Organize your department to issue a statement calling on the administration to divest its support for Israel's apartheid and occupation.
- Join the Global General Strike on Friday, October 20 by taking Friday off in protest against repressive state terror against Palestinians worldwide.

As an **individual** →

- Call and email your representatives to demand that congress [stop funding the genocide in Gaza](#).
- Join actions being organized on your campus or community.
- Sign onto petitions or letters of demands from local pro-Palestine organizers.
- Encourage peers and other campus community members to take action.

OUTREACH

*****[LINK TO GRAPHICS TO POST ON SOCIAL MEDIA](#)*****

Caption template to post on social media

 **CALLING ALL STUDENTS: RISE FOR GAZA** 

From Wednesday, October 18th- Wednesday, October 25th, the above coalition of organizations are calling for a week of action to demand an END to university complicity in Israel's genocide of Gaza and an END to the U.S.-backed siege.

TAKE ACTION TODAY! Check out the toolkit in @nationalsjp, @wearedissenters, or @anakbayanusa bio for more information, and reach out with any questions!

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free! 🇵🇸

Text templates to students and student organizations (group chats, social media, messages, etc.)

Hello [insert name]! [Organizer name] here with [Organization name]. I'm reaching out to invite [insert Org name] to join a national week of actions in solidarity with the 2.3 million Palestinians facing genocide.

Since Oct 7th, Israeli airstrikes have killed 2,750 Palestinians and wounded 9,700 in Gaza. Schools, hospitals, places of worship, evacuation roads-- everything has been bombed and nowhere is safe. Many if not all of the bombs dropped were manufactured by US companies like Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed, and others, which our university invests in and partners with. The time is now for us to take action.

We are planning a [action tactic] on [insert date]. Will you join us?

Next steps after confirming participation/support:.

- 1. Share action toolkit*
- 2. Follow up*

Email templates to students and student organizations

Dear [XYZ],

Since Oct 7th, Israeli airstrikes have killed 2,750 Palestinians and wounded 9,700 in Gaza. Schools, hospitals, places of worship, evacuation roads-- everything has been bombed and nowhere is safe. Many if not all of the bombs being dropped as I write this were manufactured by US companies like Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed, and others, all of whom US universities invest in and partner with. The time is now for us to take action.

Our university administration has **[expressed uncritical support for the state of Israel // (if your university has released a vague or ‘both sides’ statement) refused to acknowledge the historic and ongoing genocide of the Palestinian people with a cowardly, decontextualized “both sides” statement // (if your university has not released a statement) has chosen to remain silent amidst the ongoing and intensified genocide of the Palestinian people]**. We know that this is not unique to our campus, or to our context. University administrators nationwide along with the media establishment, are deploying Islamophobic and racist, anti-Arab tropes to dehumanize Palestinians.

Enough—we choose to dissent.

[if immediately applicable, cite example in 1-2 sentences]

The time is now for us to take action and demand an immediate end to the siege on Gaza and the complete divestment from war profiteers.

On **[insert time/day]**, a coalition of student organizations – **[insert organizations]**– at **[insert university]** are participating in the national week of actions in solidarity with Palestinians facing bombardment, genocide, apartheid.

Join us to demand an immediate end to the siege of Gaza and the U.S. military funding and arms sales to Israel.

Can you make it?

[sign off]

Allies/Community Groups to share to members to support

Dear [NAME],

Since Oct 7th, Israeli airstrikes have killed 2,750 Palestinians and wounded 9,700 in Gaza. Schools, hospitals, places of worship, evacuation roads—everything has been bombed and nowhere is safe to take shelter. Many if not all of the bombs being dropped as **[we/I]** write this were manufactured by US companies like Boeing, Raytheon, Lockheed, and others, all of whom US universities invest in and partner with. The time is now for us to stand in solidarity with groups taking action.

Join us in supporting a coalition of student organizations – **[insert organizations]**– at **[insert university]** on **[insert time/day]** as they participate in the national week of actions in solidarity with Palestinians facing bombardment, genocide, apartheid.

The time is now for us to follow the call of youth organizers nationwide and take action to demand an immediate end to the siege on Gaza and the U.S. military funding and arms sales to Israel.

Will we see you there on **[insert day]**?

[sign off]

SAFETY PLANNING

Here are some **tools to help your group assess, mitigate and stay informed about risks** in the context of taking action on and off campus:

- ❖ [Tips for Digital Security](#)
- ❖ [Harassment Protection for Students and Academics](#)
- ❖ [Contact your local National Lawyers Guild chapter to invite Legal Observers to your protest or to find a representative for someone arrested at a protest.](#)
- ❖ [Civil Disobedience at Public Universities from the ACLU of Northern California](#)
- ❖ [Security Culture for Activists Toolkit from The Ruckus Society for more tips!](#)

FORM A SAFETY TEAM (Source: [Get in Formation: A Community Safety Toolkit](#))

The safety team decides on security protocols and makes major decisions on the day of the action. Here are some roles to consider if you're planning a large action and have a lot of people ready to help out:

Security Coordinator: The point person of the security team, makes decisions on formation changes, de-escalation tactics, and participates in tactical team decisions. Sometimes trains the team before the action or event.

Program Point: This is a non-security role. This person generally coordinates speakers, performances, and any other elements of the program. Program Point is an

important part of the Tactical Team because this person knows the run of show and can help to shift or end the program depending on security needs.

Police Negotiator: The designated person to interact with police, show permits (if needed), and communicate between tactical and police. Generally, this role is used to 'buy time', support the action or event to meet the goal, and anticipate and reduce potential arrests.

Marshall: These are the eyes and ears of a security team. There is usually one marshall for every 20 participants, depending on the level of risk. Marshalls hold the perimeter for the action and act as a buffer between the police and participants. Some marshalls may be trained in physical de-escalation.

Captains: A security team larger than 10 people should have captains in order to relay information quickly and maintain discipline and coordination. Captains are responsible for relaying information to a group of as few as three to as many as eight marshalls.

Lookouts: Two to four people who run the perimeter of the action to relay information and communication from one end of the action to the other. Runners can also be used to scout potential concerns such as oncoming traffic or police presence.

Legal Support: A lawyer who is on-call (and off-site) to advocate for the release of anyone who is arrested during the action.

Legal Observers: A team (generally one for every 15 participants) who records all police activity and DOES NOT intervene in physical or verbal incidents. Usually wears different clothing to distinguish from the security team.

De-escalators: These are generally highly skilled folks whose role is to intervene in physical violence. They can be officially a part of security or roaming the crowd, depending on conditions.

RESOURCES

- If your organization or student group needs additional resources, action planning, or campus backlash support, submit a request to NSJP's [Campus Support Coalition](#).
- If your chapter or student group needs additional support to plan and execute your action(s), fill out [Dissenters Support Form](#).
- Direct students facing Zionist harassment to [Pal Legal's intake form](#).
- [Chapters | National Lawyers Guild](#)
- [Harassment Protection for Students and Academics](#)
- [Know Your Rights — Palestine Legal](#)
- [Get in Formation: A Community Safety Toolkit](#)
- [Safety Training --Shareable](#)
- [TO SHARE De-Escalation Handout](#)

APPENDIX

Here are some ways you can take action this week. Click the links to see more details about each tactic.

- [Rally + March](#)
- [Letter Delivery](#)
- [Call In Action](#)
- [Vigil / Altar Build](#)
- [Walkout](#)
- [Cafeteria / Student Center Disruption](#)
- [Bird-Dogging](#)
- [Sit-in / Occupation](#)
- [Blockade](#)

Letter Delivery

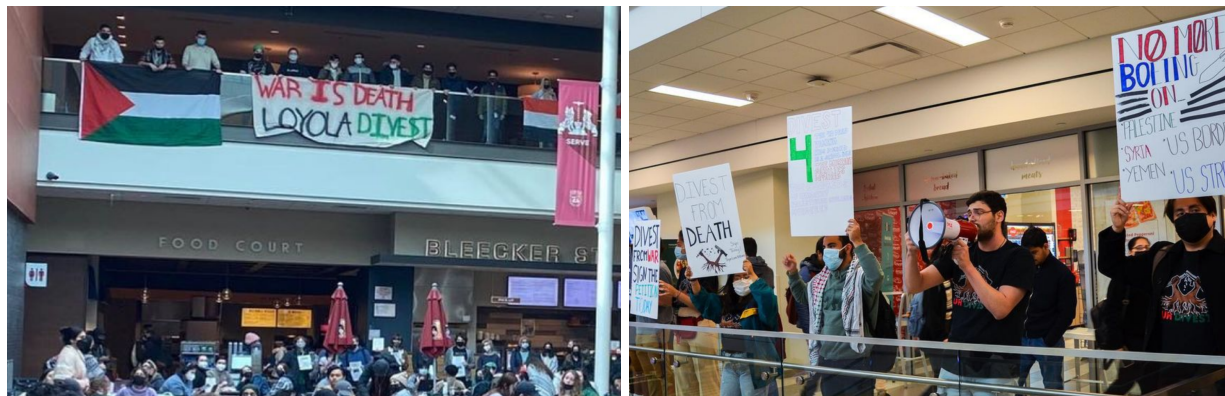
A tactic where participants deliver a letter or other document to a target or set of targets. The letter may be linked to a petition or otherwise be representative of the will of the people.



Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Creative Petition Delivery](#)

Cafeteria/Student Center Disruption

An opportunity to amplify your message on campus by disrupting busy spaces to make an intervention on business as usual.



Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Creative Disruption](#)
[#BlackBrunch Manual](#)

Blockade

A tactic where participants block access to a location. Blockades may be formed with peoples' bodies, bodies attached to various kinds of equipment, and/or simply objects that are difficult to remove (e.g. heavy objects or lots of a different kind of object).



Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Blockade](#)
[Destructibles - Lockboxes](#)
[The Ruckus Society - A Tiny Little Blockades Booklet](#)

Sit-in / Occupation

The occupation of a space of significance to the target by action participants. These actions may have a predetermined length or continue until the target meets the demands.



Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Occupation](#)
[UltraViolet Guide to Sit-Ins](#)

Walkout

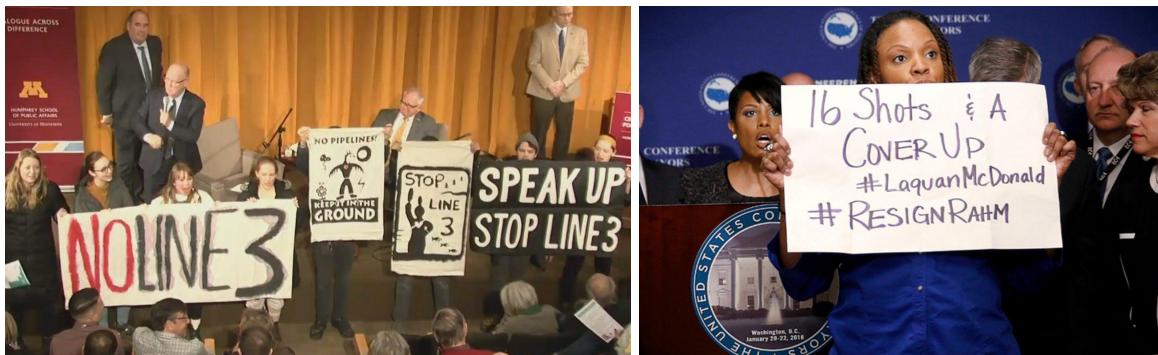
A tactic in which participants, typically students or faculty, walk out of their classes while school is in session in order to join a larger action calling attention to the issue.



Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Distributed Action](#)

Bird-Dogging

A tactic in which participants pursue their target wherever they are in order to force the target to pay attention or respond to their issue. This usually involves gathering some information on where your target might be when (e.g. speaking engagements, meetings, or other events) and/or familiarizing yourself with your targets' routines. The same person or persons does not need to be present at each instance of bird-dogging for it to be effective, so long as the messaging is consistent.



Resources: [Backbone Campaign - Bird-Dog Manual \(Excerpt\)](#)
[Beautiful Trouble - Media Jacking](#)
[Center for Biological Diversity - How to Bird Dog](#)

Call-In Action

A tactic in which participants call targets nonstop, forcing them to pay attention to the issue. This is an accessible action that many people can participate in, regardless of location.

PHONE JAM

This tactic involves many people calling a target at once and repeatedly for a specific and strategic time.

1. Decide on time/day and messaging.
2. Develop and share a suggested script for people to support what they say.
3. Call your target (on all the numbers they have) and deliver the messaging.
4. When you get voicemail, leave a message AND continue to call until someone answers the phone.

RUCKUS SOCIETY **BLACKOUT**

Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Phone Banking](#)
[Beautiful Trouble - Phone Blockade](#)

Vigil / Altar Build

Mourning and remembrance as protest. The creation of a physical sacred space (e.g. an altar) in order to remember those whose lives have been lost due to the issue at hand. Altars may be standalone or accompanied by a vigil, which typically involves speaking and/or activities that those present may take part in.



Resources: [Beautiful Trouble - Artistic Vigil](#)
[Beautiful Trouble - Lamentation](#)
[Black Feminist Future - Community Altar Building Toolkit](#)

[Check out this slideshow of examples, tips, and resources for more inspiration!](#)

REMINDER

Document your action(s)!

Take photos of your action, to show that people are throwing down for Palestine. For security reasons you may want to avoid closeups of faces, so instead focus on messages on signs and photos that demonstrate the size of the crowd. Since mainstream media is carrying out a massive dehumanization and misinformation campaign, it's imperative that we tell our own stories of resistance and solidarity.

Share your photos through DM's with the organizations behind this week of action (@nationalsjp, @aroc_bayarea, @palestiniayouthmovement, @wearedissenters, @anakbayanusa), so that we can amplify each other's work. Collective action is an important site of strength and inspiration as we organize against tremendous odds right now to end the US's support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The Palm Beach Post

BOCA RATON

Chaos at FAU: Tension boils over with 3 arrests following pro-Palestine march on campus



James Coleman

Palm Beach Post

Published 5:05 p.m. ET Oct. 13, 2023 | Updated 6:41 p.m. ET Oct. 13, 2023

BOCA RATON — Three people were arrested on Florida Atlantic University's campus Wednesday following a march to show support for Palestine that was met with counter protests, resulting in an emotional, chaotic scene and campus police tackling a young woman to the ground.

The woman, a 19-year-old FAU student whose birthplace is Jordan, was arrested on a felony battery charge after she elbowed a pro-Israeli woman, according to an FAU police report. Two other demonstrators were taken into custody and are facing charges of battery, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct. Police indicated the other two are not FAU students.

The march, which was organized by the FAU Muslim Student Association, included about 100 protesters, according to witnesses. A spokesperson for the student group said in a statement issued Friday that the march was approved by FAU and "it was declared at the outset that it would be nonviolent and peaceful."

Rally for Israel: 'The world needs to see us showing support'

The protest and subsequent incident stemmed from the violence in Israel after the militant group Hamas launched a surprise terrorist attack in Israel, killing more than 1,200 Israelis and taking an estimated 150 people hostage, including Americans.

Israel responded swiftly to the Hamas attack with rockets of its own into the Gaza Strip, and destroying numerous buildings and killing more than 1,000 Palestinians, according to Hamas, which controls Gaza.

The latest overseas violence is another chapter in the decades-long battle over land and sovereignty in the Middle East.

What happened on FAU's campus at Pro-Palestine march?

According to the Florida Atlantic student newspaper, the demonstration began around 1 p.m. in front of the Atlantic Dining Hall, where at least 20 law-enforcement officers and Florida troopers were present to provide protection and maintain order during the protest.

Some students marched with Palestinian flags around their backs and pro-Palestinian signs. A few minutes later, at least 20 pro-Israel counter-protesters approached the pro-Palestine demonstrators near the Breezeway and confronted the group, leading to the physical altercation.

According to the police report, a 19-year-old woman not affiliated with FAU said during the march she was hit in the face by the elbow of the woman who was arrested. Police also observed the incident.

RELATED: Residents from heavily Jewish populated Boca Raton pack house for solidarity event

When FAU police attempted to separate the woman and handcuff her after the punch, the woman "raised her left leg and kicked the officer." The police report said the officer then pushed her face to the ground and placed temporary restraints on her.

The woman was taken into custody and transported to the Palm Beach County Jail.

Reaction from FAU Palestinian group organizing the march

A statement from the FAU Muslim Student Association president on Friday claimed that during the demonstration, "the other side attempted to disperse our march by standing in the center of it and assaulting us in the breezeway.

"Nasty remarks were thrown by the opposing side and they also stepped in to violently knock down our signs. We made every effort to ensure that this was kept as calm as possible, and I commend every member of our group who maintained their composure in the face of the heinous things that were said and done to us.

"Instead of twisting it, we wish the media had highlighted a hug that was exchanged from a counter-protestor, the composed talk that was had between the two parties and the opinions that were changed."

The statement went on to say that the group does not support killings of innocent civilians, instead offering solidarity with Palestinians concerning their homeland.

RELATED: How to help and support Israel with these Palm Beach County fundraisers and memorials

RELATED: Israel attacks shock state as politicians react and residents rally

After the weekend attacks in Israel, the university released a statement condemning the attacks and supporting Israel's right to defend itself.

On Wednesday, in response to the protest, the university put out another statement.

"Florida Atlantic University already this week has clearly stated its support for Israel and fully supports Israel's right to defend itself," the statement said. "In the wake this week of on-campus protests denouncing Israel's actions, the university today restates this position."

That did not sit well with the Muslim student group, which, in a letter sent to the university Wednesday, said that some in their group feel the statements by the school "are inappropriate, inaccurate and harmful given that they lack nuance, historicity and critical analysis.

"The initial statement sent on Monday offered support and empathy toward Israel, without extending the same compassion and support toward Palestinians."

University response to recent campus protests

Joshua Glanzer, FAU associate vice president for media relations and public affairs, responded that there were differences in the protests.

"We are pleased that a number of student-led events that have taken place this week on campus were largely conducted in a manner befitting the institution's core values," Glanzer said.

RELATED: 'The world needs to see us showing support': Rally for Israel fills Gardens I-95 overpass

"However, three participants at a 'Protest For Palestine' march Wednesday were arrested on charges that included resisting arrest, battery, and disorderly conduct. One of the arrests involved a student and two were not affiliated with the university."

Angela Nichols, a political science professor, who was standing on the outskirts of the protest, said both groups should exercise compassion for one another.

"You can be pro-Israel and pro-Palestine at the same time, even though that sounds like an oxymoron right now, because you can believe that both deserve citizenship, you can believe that both deserve rights, you can believe that," she told The University Press. "Both deserve independence and recognition for the trauma, pain and suffering that everyone who lives in that part of the world has been enduring."

FAU's statement went on to say that the school "takes very seriously its responsibilities to educate future generations to understand history and provide the moral clarity to know the difference between right and wrong."

State Rep. Randy Fine, however, went a step further. Fine, the lone Jewish Republican in Florida's Legislature, called on Gov. Ron DeSantis to use a 2019 antisemitism law to punish pro-Palestinian demonstrators at state colleges and universities that would could result in the expulsion of students.

DeSantis's office responded saying that while he agrees with Fine, the laws must be enforced by the universities.

Fine's letter cited demonstrations at schools in eight Florida cities, including Boca Raton.

Fine was not named a finalist for FAU's vacant president position, and many faculty members and outside observers suspect the real reason state officials halted the search process is because Fine is the governor's preferred candidate.

RELATED: Post readers sound off on the Hamas attack and the war in Israel | Letters

Similar protests and vigils have taken place on other college campuses, including the University of Florida in Gainesville, where some students and community members were sent to the hospital following a commotion that ensued from a misunderstanding after someone in the crowd fainted.

The conflict in the Middle East, which entered its seventh day Friday, has a long history rooted in centuries-old religious tensions, and increasing Israeli military raids within

Palestinian territories along with counter violence.

Staff reporters Julius Whigham II and Jasmine Fernandez and FAU University Press reporters Kirk Orr, Jason Steinfeld and Elisabeth Gaffney along with USA Today contributed to this report.

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Colleges braced for antisemitism and violence. It's happening.

'I had Jewish blood on my hands,' a Tulane student said after aiding a classmate who was assaulted at a pro-Palestinian rally



By [Jack Stripling](#)

October 31, 2023 at 11:26 a.m. EDT

Recent days have witnessed what Jewish students and watchdog groups describe as a raft of antisemitic incidents on college campuses. Jewish students at Cooper Union in New York City sheltered in a library as pro-Palestinian demonstrators banged on the glass walls of the building. At a pro-Palestinian protest near Tulane University, at least two students were assaulted in a melee that began when someone tried to burn an Israeli flag. And anonymous posters flooded a Cornell message board with threats, prompting the school's president to alert the FBI. "If you see a Jewish 'person' on campus follow them home and slit their throats," one message said. Another threatened to "bring an assault rifle to campus and shoot all you pig jews."

Israel-Gaza war



(Oded Balilty/AP)

The U.N. Security Council will reconvene Thursday after a vote on a war-related resolution was delayed three times because of opposition from the United States.

For context: Understand what's behind the Israel-Gaza war.

College administrators braced at the start of the Israel-Gaza conflict for an outbreak of antisemitism, Islamophobia, harassment and even violence. Free speech advocates predicted infringements on constitutional rights. Now, as the raid by Hamas against Israeli civilians gives way to wider combat in the region, those fears appear to be coming to fruition. The solemn and peaceable candlelight vigils from earlier this month preceded uglier confrontations, leaving Jewish college students feeling anxious, afraid and unsafe.

Amid what the Biden administration on Monday described as an “alarming rise” of antisemitism on college campuses, some Jewish students say they feel more vulnerable than ever before.

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“It’s very frightening to be a Jewish college student right now,” Rez said. “We think the floodgates have opened up. ... It’s a nightmare.”



Israel’s counterattack against Hamas, the militant group that controls the Gaza Strip, has brought forth intense protests nationwide, including on college campuses. At many rallies for Palestinian sovereignty and human rights, demonstrators have used variations of a phrase that some Jewish students call a threat: “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.”

Defenders of the phrase often say that the line refers to a one-state solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians over that tract of land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, in which Arabs and Jews could have equal voting rights. But the U.S. and U.N. position is that Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish state and that the conflict should be solved with a “two-state solution,” one country for each group.

Jewish students hear “the river to the sea” as an open call for the eradication of Israel, a haunting proposition given the legacy of the Holocaust that led to Israel’s creation. The phrase has been printed on fliers and projected onto the facade of a building at George Washington University. Sometimes the line has been accompanied by other

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and national director of the Anti-Defamation League, who calls the uptick of antisemitism on campus real and unambiguous. “There’s nothing wrong with advocating for a two-state solution. There’s something profoundly wrong with advocating for a final solution. The line is much more black and white than people appreciate.”

The debates also pose a free-speech challenge for university leaders, who must walk a line between allowing members of the community to voice their views while still working to make campus groups feel safe. Activists argue about what constitutes antisemitism, and even where hatred of Jews is clear, it’s generally not illegal. At the same time, donors and politicians are pressuring administrators to take a hard line against antisemitism and the community members they say espouse it. At the University of Pennsylvania, for instance, a board member at the business school urged others to slash their donations until the university takes a tougher line against hateful speech.

An ‘anti-Jew’ rally

At Cooper Union last week, Taylor Roslyn Lent said she witnessed a pro-Palestinian protest morph into a “pure anti-Jew” rally. Lent was among about a dozen Jewish students in a library Wednesday as pro-Palestinian demonstrators gathered outside the glass walls. Her group included men wearing yarmulkes, making them identifiable as Jewish, she said. Protesters banged on doors and windows, chanting aggressively and pointing at the Jewish students, Lent said.

“I felt hated for my Jewish identity,” she said. “There’s definitely a big difference between a pro-Palestine-anti-Israel rally, and an anti-Jewish rally. And the more the day went on, the more it felt like an anti-Jewish rally.”

She grew more anxious, she said, when Cooper Union officials began offering the students what sounded like various means of escape — an escort to the second floor, a backdoor exit followed by an Uber ride.

“I felt not safe, deep down,” Lent said.

In a briefing with reporters after the incident, an NYPD chief of patrol said there was “no direct threat” to the students — and that they had not been in danger. In a statement provided to The Washington Post on Monday, a Cooper Union spokesperson reiterated that point.

An administrator “checked in with students to offer support if they were feeling concerns about leaving the building,” the spokesperson said in an email. “None took her up on those offers.” According to the spokesperson, Cooper has “increased security on campus in collaboration with external security partners and with the NYPD.”

The incident at Cooper Union comes on the heels of several others that have raised concerns about the safety and treatment of Jewish students. At Stanford University, an instructor was accused earlier this month of telling Jewish students to stand in the corner of a classroom, saying, “This is what Israel does to the Palestinians.” (The university

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demonstrator to try to snatch the flag. In an ensuing melee, a couple of the demonstrators, who appeared to be pro-Palestinian, repeatedly struck Mann, videos show. Mann went to the hospital for treatment, he told The Post in an interview Monday.

In a dazed state, Mann said he was guided to safety by “two very brave girls,” who came to his aid. One of them was Natalie Mendelsohn, a fellow Tulane student, who rushed to Mann after he had been “bashed in the face,” she told The Post. “There was blood all over me — all over him,” she said.

“I had Jewish blood on my hands,” Mendelsohn said, “and that’s something I never thought I would encounter. It was very surreal and shocking.”

In statements, Tulane President Michael Fitts described the violence at the rally as “deeply distressing.” He said that “several individuals” had been arrested and that they would be barred from entering Tulane’s campuses. University police will increase their presence and patrols on campus, he said. “We fully recognize that our community was deeply affected by yesterday’s violence,” the statement said, “and that we must ensure it does not happen again.”

Mendelsohn grew up hearing stories of her grandfather, Victor Mendelsohn, a Holocaust survivor. She said the sight of a Jewish student being beaten triggered an instinct: “I had to do something.”

After the incident, Mendelsohn said, “I immediately called my dad.”

David Mendelsohn, Natalie’s father, said she was “sobbing, crying, fearful” when she called. He “kept a stiff upper lip,” he said, but spent the whole day troubled that his daughter had been in danger.

“You can’t say everything’s going to be okay, because everything’s not going to be okay,” David Mendelsohn said. “Things are going to get worse.”

Blacklisting Palestinian supporters

As tensions rise, some pro-Palestinian students say they, too, are being targeted and harassed for nonviolent protests against what they call Israeli occupation and control of Arab lands. A student at the University of South Florida, who has joined in rallies there, said that someone on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, had referred to the pro-Palestinian gatherings as “target practice.”

“We took that as a threat that someone might want to do us harm,” said the student, who asked not to be identified because she feared being “blacklisted” for her views. Several companies said this month that they would not hire Harvard students whose student organizations had signed a letter denouncing Israel.

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The chancellor of Florida’s State University System, in consultation with Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, has ordered that campus chapters of National Students for Justice in Palestine be “deactivated,” suggesting the group provides “material support” to Hamas, a recognized terrorist organization. The Anti-Defamation League and Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law have called on college presidents to investigate chapters of the student group, accusing some of “celebrating terrorism.”

In a letter last week to University of Florida President Ben Sasse, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, a free-speech advocacy group, urged the president not to comply with the chancellor’s “unconstitutional” deactivation directive. “At times of great political and social unrest,” the letter said, “illiberal calls to silence unpopular views inevitably rise.”

In a letter published Monday, more than 100 Columbia University and Barnard College professors defended the rights of students who had condemned “Israel’s apartheid and colonial system.” The students’ claims “should not be considered anti-Semitic,” the letter states. Moreover, the professors condemned “the vicious targeting of our students with doxing, public shaming, surveillance by members of our community, including other students, and reprisals from employers.”

Where is the line between free speech and supporting terrorism? When does political activism slide into antisemitism or Islamophobia? The precise answers may be elusive, but college students say the fear they’re experiencing at this tense moment is unfamiliar and intense, showing no signs of abatement. And political leaders are weighing in. On Tuesday, Virginia Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin, for instance, created a situation room to track and “combat threats of violence against Jewish people and other religious communities,” including on campus.

Law enforcement is on alert around the country. On Tuesday, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul (D) said on X that police had taken into custody a “person of interest” in the case of message-board threats at Cornell. George Mason University officials also said police in Virginia were investigating a video of a person taking down and tearing up a poster that appeared to depict Israeli children who have been kidnapped.

Diego Leibman Gálvez, a senior at Stanford University, said he’s “seen a massive rise in antisemitism on campus.” He pointed to pro-Palestinian groups on campus “openly celebrating an attack on innocent civilians” and marching on campus chanting “from the river to the sea.”

“It’s a very popular chant across campus,” he said. “Whether or not the students who are yelling understand what they are saying, as a Jew, it’s scary. It’s a scary time to be on campus.”

Laura Meckler contributed reporting to this story.

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Inside the Pro-Palestinian Group Protesting Across College Campuses

Students for Justice in Palestine, which was founded at Berkeley, has fueled activism, and, critics say, intimidation and antisemitism.



By Alan Blinder

Alan Blinder reported from Washington, where he met with members of Students for Justice in Palestine's national steering committee who had gathered for a protest.

Nov. 17, 2023

After last month's attack on Israel by Hamas, Students for Justice in Palestine promoted a "tool kit" for activists that proclaimed "glory to our resistance." The group has been banned or suspended by Brandeis, Columbia and George Washington University. And it was recently the target of thundering speeches on Capitol Hill and blistered during a Republican presidential debate.

In the six weeks since Hamas attacked Israel, there may be no college group that has drawn more scrutiny than Students for Justice in Palestine, perhaps the most popular and divisive campus organization championing the Palestinian cause.

But unlike many national campus groups — whether they are sororities, fraternities, religious or political — Students for Justice in Palestine is by design a loosely connected network of autonomous chapters. There is no national headquarters and no named leader. There is a national student steering committee, but it is anonymous. The group has never registered as a nonprofit, and it has never had to file tax documents.

One of the people who founded it about 30 years ago, Hatem Bazian, has described the setup as "a symbolic franchise without a franchise fee."

That deliberate lack of hierarchy has been crucial to the network's ascent, allowing chapters to spring up with few obstacles, according to interviews with 20 people and a survey of videos, academic writings, archival news accounts and public records. The network's constellation of tactics and rhetoric, including theatrical demonstrations with "apartheid walls" and mock Israeli checkpoints, has been replicated on campuses across the country.

The flat structure, though, has also fueled worries among pro-Israel groups that accuse the network of driving antisemitism on campuses, often with little accountability. A 2016 report from the Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies at Brandeis asserted that the presence of a chapter on a campus was "one of the strongest predictors of perceiving a hostile climate toward Israel and Jews."



A member of Students for Justice in Palestine's national steering committee in Stanton Park, in Washington, D.C. Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The New York



A second member of the committee wearing a pro-Palestinian necklace. Amanda Andrade-Rhoades for The New York Times

Times

Some critics of the network have gone as far as to raise fears that the student group has illegal financial ties to Hamas, which the U.S. government considers a terrorist organization. But they have not marshaled irrefutable evidence of that, and no prosecutor has ever brought charges against the network.

Members acknowledge that their tactics can provoke discomfort, but insist that the group's mission is focused on progressive causes, mainly the plight of Palestinians, and combating ills that include white supremacy and antisemitism. And they believe that the group's structure is inseparable from its integrity as a student activist movement, which has surged in intensity as the death toll in Gaza — now more than 11,000, according to the authorities there — has increased.

Three members of the national steering committee said that they had been drawn to the network, which has been closely tied to organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace, because they saw it as a time-tested way to press for sweeping, radical change.

The committee members, all current or recently graduated students who were interviewed in Washington, spoke on the condition of anonymity because they said they worried for their safety. Some members of the group have had their personal information posted online without their permission.

“I think this is a moment where my personal feelings don't matter at all,” said Carrie, a 22-year-old Jewish person from Baltimore and the only steering committee member who agreed to allow part of her name to be published. “My priority is showing up for my Palestinian and Arab comrades.”



Students for Justice in Palestine helped organize this month's pro-Palestinian march in Washington. Amir Hamja/The New York Times

Drawing Headlines

Although published reports have pegged its founding to 2001, Students for Justice in Palestine actually began in the early 1990s at the University of California, Berkeley, according to Dr. Bazian, one of the founders.

Apartheid was collapsing in South Africa, he said, and some critics of Pretoria's policies turned toward the Palestinian cause through the new student group. Other activists — environmentalists, opponents of American intervention in Latin America, critics of the gulf war — joined in, broadening the group's base.

Recalling its early days in a speech last month, Dr. Bazian said, "Anyone who wants to organize for Palestine is welcome, as long as you have the principle of centering Palestinian concerns."

Some researchers and former members believe the Oslo Peace Accords, which in the 1990s created a foundation for a Middle East peace process, briefly sapped interest in the group. In 2000, as the Second Intifada commenced after the collapse of peace talks, activity increased.

By the middle of 2001, the Berkeley group was drawing headlines. It pressed unsuccessfully for the university system's regents to divest from Israel, and it blocked a campus gate to simulate an Israeli checkpoint. Dozens of people were arrested during a protest when students locked most of a campus building's doors with chains and prevented people from using the remaining entrances, according to an account at the time by a campus publication, *The Daily Californian*.

"No justice, no midterm!" went one chant, according to *The Mercury News*, a newspaper in nearby San Jose, Calif. (Some people, *The Daily Californian* reported, climbed through windows to try to get to classes.)



Hatem Bazian said that he helped found the group in the early 1990s. Amir Hamja/The New York Times

The group's protests eventually included "apartheid walls" with students, dressed as Palestinian refugees, standing nearby. Members and supporters saw the head-turning demonstrations as ways to puncture press coverage that they regarded as too sympathetic toward Israel.

But other students and faculty members said the group's approach heightened polarization. At some point, the group picked up a nickname among critics at Berkeley and elsewhere: "Students for Just Us in Palestine."

"The way S.J.P. framed the debate, it was kind of more interested in inflaming emotions, placing the blame, rather than trying to educate others," said Scott Newman, the president of the Jewish Student Union at Berkeley for the 2000-1 academic year.

Mr. Newman, who said he did not remember tense protests before the group's resurgence, described the tactics as "hostile" and recalled a demonstration where someone had a sign bearing three symbols: the Star of David, an equal sign and a swastika. Recalling the approach more than two decades later, he said: "You go to Berkeley, you get used to ordinary political protest. This was not that."

He said, though, that Students for Justice in Palestine was effective at drawing attention to its interpretation of events and policy.

The Sept. 11 terror attacks upended the group's momentum, but less than a year later, with many American Muslims feeling demonized, chapter members were holding a vigil at Harvard and staging weekly sit-ins at the University of Illinois.

"It was following in sort of the Berkeley tradition of social action," said William Youmans, an associate professor at George Washington who was a member of the Berkeley chapter around that time.

The hugely visible demonstrations in California, he said, allowed the group to expand, even as it remained decentralized, its chapters autonomous.



Students for Justice in Palestine hosted a sign-making and education event this year at Arizona State University. Megan Mendoza/The Republic, via USA Today Network, via Reuters

Early leaders like Dr. Bazian feared infiltration and disruption, so there was no national chain of command. In an interview, Dr. Bazian, now a lecturer at Berkeley, said that the approach “allows for any campus that sees the principle to initiate a chapter and get going.”

It was not unusual for universities to help underwrite the groups, as they have often done with registered student organizations. Dr. Youmans remembered that the Berkeley chapter of his era “would survive on funding from the university or the equivalent of bake sales.”

The sums have not always been princely. In 2013, the University of Tennessee’s chapter received \$550. (Organizers of “Sex Week” were awarded \$20,000.) Chapters have often seemed closer to broke than flush.

“The other day, I was like, ‘Why don’t you all make a good banner?’” said Pranav Jani, the faculty adviser to the chapter at Ohio State University, where he is an associate professor. “They were like, ‘Well, we don’t have any money.’”

In Chicago, the chapter at DePaul University sometimes gets donations of falafel or hummus from local restaurants, according to Laila Farah, the chapter’s faculty adviser and an associate professor at the university.

Researchers and pro-Israel groups have spent years trying to trace the network’s funding and have been skeptical of the poverty claims. They note that the national group collects donations, but the amount has not been made public. They have also cited the network’s intellectual and financial connections to American Muslims for Palestine, a Virginia group mired in litigation over whether it is an “alter ego” for a disbanded organization linked to Hamas.

Jonathan Schanzer, senior vice president for research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, an organization that has been critical of Hamas, told Congress in 2016 that American Muslims for Palestine was “arguably the most important sponsor and organizer” for the student group. With that support, he told a House committee this past Wednesday, groups like Students for Justice in Palestine “systematically threaten or intimidate Jewish and pro-Israel students.”

Dr. Bazian, now the chairman of American Muslims for Palestine’s board, played down its ties to the student group, which he said were generally limited to providing printed materials and offering grants for students to bring in speakers or attend conferences. He said that his group does not have meaningful power over Students for Justice in Palestine.

The student network’s lack of formal structure has not helped ease concerns. Even after the group developed a national steering committee that helped organize conferences and other resources, critics said, it did not declare itself a nonprofit or formally incorporate.

The steering committee members recoiled at the notion of coast-to-coast infrastructure, even if it could maybe yield more money and more trust.

“It would jeopardize the integrity of our movement as a grass-roots one,” Carrie said.

The steering committee members said that they had no control over campus chapters. The committee, which today has about a dozen members, sees itself as an advisory body, with members saying they offer the local chapters little more than ideas and, from time to time, tools that they can elect to use.

Among the network’s alumni, the national group can come off as informal.

“I tried to reach out to them to say, ‘I was involved, and, hey, if you want to talk,’” Dr. Youmans said of a past entreaty. “They never really got back to me.”



Members of Students for Justice in Palestine's steering committee say that their informal structure is important to the group. Bing Guan for The New York Times

'There Are Mistakes Made. There Are Triumphs Made.'

For years, the notoriety of Students for Justice in Palestine rose after protests at one university or another: an interim suspension at Berkeley after occupying an academic building; at Rutgers, the donning of shirts splattered with red to resemble blood; at George Washington, a dispute over anti-Zionism posters.

But after the Hamas attacks in October, a five-page "Day of Resistance" tool kit reverberated far beyond campuses.

Distributed by the national steering committee, the packet included a template for an illustrated advertisement that showed a thicket of protesters beneath a Palestinian flag.

From above, a paraglider seemed to fly in — widely perceived as a deliberate echo of Hamas's use of paragliders during its assault on Israel last month.

"We as Palestinian students in exile are PART of this movement," the tool kit said, "not in solidarity with this movement."

The tool kit cemented the idea for many critics that the group supported Hamas, at least ideologically. The Anti-Defamation League and the Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law have accused the network of "celebrating terrorism."

Steering committee members declined to discuss the tool kit for this article. But one member, who had recently graduated from a university in Texas, said the group was broadly engaged in a "constant process of trial, error, growth until freedom."

"We are working to find the best way for our people to live a life not under siege," the member said. "And there are mistakes made. There are triumphs made."

In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis's administration argued that the tool kit amounted to material support for terrorism — defined by law as providing, or conspiring to provide, "property, tangible or intangible, or service" to a foreign terrorist organization — and sought the "deactivation" of two chapters at public universities in the state.

Legal experts doubted that the proposed ban was legal, and the American Civil Liberties Union and Palestine Legal filed a lawsuit on Thursday.

During a state university system board meeting on Nov. 9, Chancellor Ray Rodrigues signaled that the state was largely backing down. The campus groups, Mr. Rodrigues said, had "represented to administration that they are not chartered or under the headship of the National Students for Justice in Palestine."

The group's supporters said they were unsurprised by the newest phase of the campaign to discredit the network. Anything else, Dr. Youmans said, "would have been a break from a really rich history."

Mr. Newman, the former Jewish Student Union leader at Berkeley, said he was unsurprised that Students for Justice in Palestine remained a force.

"As long as there's people willing to listen to one side of the story, groups like S.J.P. will continue to exist," he said.

The chapters are still signing up members and still posting on Instagram. The students from the steering committee, though, said they sometimes struggle to grapple with the intense public glare and the weight of events thousands of miles from American campuses.

"The range of emotions that I've been feeling," a 23-year-old psychology student said, "I didn't know that this many emotions existed."

Stephanie Saul contributed reporting from New York.

Alan Blinder is a national correspondent for The Times, covering education. He has reported from more than 35 states, as well as Asia and Europe, since joining The Times in 2013. [More about Alan Blinder](#)

COLUMBIA NEWS

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ANNOUNCEMENT


Statement From Gerald Rosberg, Chair of the Special Committee on Campus Safety

November 10, 2023



Columbia University is suspending Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) as official student groups through the end of the fall term. This decision was made after the two groups repeatedly violated University policies related to holding campus events, culminating in an unauthorized event Thursday afternoon that proceeded despite warnings and included threatening rhetoric and intimidation.

Suspension means the two groups will not be eligible to hold events on campus or receive University funding. Lifting the suspension will be contingent on the two groups demonstrating a commitment to compliance with University policies and engaging in consultations at a group leadership level with University officials.

Like all student groups, SJP and JVP are required to abide by University [policies and procedures](#) . This ensures both the safety of our community and that core University activities can be conducted without disruption. During this especially charged time on our campus, we are strongly committed to giving space to student groups to participate in debate, advocacy, and protest. This relies on community members abiding by the rules and cooperating with University administrators who have a duty to ensure the safety of everyone in our community.

Gerald Rosberg

Senior Executive Vice President of the University and Chair, Special Committee on Campus Safety

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NEWS > EDUCATION

Brandeis bans pro-Palestinian student group for endorsing Hamas

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A sign marks the entrance of Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass.

Josh Reynolds / AP



By **Chris Burrell**

November 27, 2023, 11:11 AM EST | Updated on November 28, 2023

LIVE GBH 89.7
Boston Public Radio

Brandeis University has rescinded its recognition of a student group supporting Palestinians, saying that the organization has openly backed the actions of Hamas militants who attacked and killed Israelis in early October.

Brandeis officials notified the chapter of the National Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) that they would be banned from activities on campus and lose university funding.

“SJP has called on its chapters to engage in conduct that supports Hamas in its call for the elimination of the only Jewish state in the world and its people,” Brandeis spokeswoman Julie Jette wrote in a prepared statement. “Such expression is not protected by Brandeis’ principles of free speech. Students are welcome to express their support for Palestinians in a manner that complies with our rights and responsibilities.”

Brandeis’ chapter of the Students for Justice in Palestine did not respond to requests for comment but criticized the university in an Instagram post, saying that “an institution that values social justice (is) trying to silence us from speaking our truth.”

The friction on the Waltham campus comes as college campuses nationwide see bitter divisions among students, school leadership and even donors as the war in Gaza continues.

Advocates for free speech on campuses criticized Brandeis’ move to ban a student organization.

“It does strike me as undermining that broader purpose of American higher education to allow students some practice of free expression and to let them argue it out themselves consistent with the values of the First Amendment,” Tom Ginsburg, the faculty director of the University of Chicago’s Forum on Free Inquiry and Expression, told GBH News.

Ginsburg said that universities should discipline students if they run afoul of campus rules but not infringe on their free speech.

“Banning them on the basis of their viewpoint, which is held by millions of

Zach Greenberg, a senior program officer at the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression based in Philadelphia, said Brandeis had betrayed its commitment to free speech.

“Brandeis could have demonstrated how students can engage with opposing viewpoints. Instead, President [Ronald] Liebowitz is teaching them to simply silence those they hate,” Greenberg wrote in an email to GBH.

In 2018, Brandeis **committed to free expression** on campus after a years-long task force re-examined its policies. “In narrowly-defined circumstances, the university may restrict expression,” the university wrote in its new policy, which singled out any action that are illegal, defamatory or “constitutes a genuine threat or harassment.”

In a Boston Globe op-ed Tuesday, Liebowitz wrote that universities cannot tolerate student groups that promote violence against Jews or an end to Israel and must sever ties with such organizations.

“In no way does this violate higher education’s deep and enduring commitment to free speech,” Liebowitz wrote.

Last week, Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis ordered his state universities to ban the same pro-Palestinian student organization from campuses, citing the same rationale as Brandeis.

DeSantis’ administration also said that Students for Justice in Palestine is supporting a “terrorist organization.”



Chris Burrell

Chris Burrell is an investigative reporter, covering criminal justice, housing, immigration and other topics at The GBH News Center for Investigative Reporting



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Democracy Dies in Darkness

GWU suspends group over projection of pro-Palestinian slogans

Slogans were beamed last month onto a wall of a campus library. On Wednesday, police were investigating a report of vandalism of an anti-Hamas sign.

By [Martin Weil](#) and [Susan Svrluga](#)

Updated November 15, 2023 at 6:02 p.m. EST | Published November 14, 2023 at 10:10 p.m. EST

George Washington University has suspended a student group advocating for the Palestinian cause after it allegedly projected images on the campus library last month, school officials said.

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) at GWU projected multiple images on the Estelle and Melvin Gelman Library on Oct. 24, the GWU statement on Tuesday said. Jewish student groups among others have objected to the images, which were in the form of slogans, and described them as potentially antisemitic. One of the projections, according to photographs, was the phrase “Divestment from Zionist genocide now.” Others included “Glory to our martyrs” and the slogan “Free Palestine from the river to the sea.”

Israel-Gaza war

The [U.N. Security Council](#) is tentatively slated to vote Friday on a draft resolution that would call for an indefinite pause in fighting to allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza, which has been delayed multiple times [because of opposition from the United States](#).

For context: Understand what's [behind the Israel-Gaza war](#).

(Oded Balilty/AP)

Supporters of the Palestinian cause have described it as an aspirational call for freedom. Jewish and Israeli groups have suggested it is a call for destruction of the state of Israel and for ethnic cleansing of Jews from what is now Israel.

The projections, which were mentioned on network news shows and cited on Capitol Hill, drew national attention as demonstrations over the [Israel-Gaza war](#) have divided college campuses and filled city streets in recent weeks.

Earlier Tuesday, thousands of demonstrators attended a rally on the National Mall to express solidarity with Israel, condemn antisemitism in the United States and globally, and demand the release of hostages taken by Hamas in its Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

In another sign of the intensifying tensions on the campus, a nonprofit group reported Wednesday that someone threw a rock at their truck carrying a sign condemning Hamas and antisemitism. The person yelled “Free Palestine!” the group said.

“It makes me feel scared for Jewish students — really, really nervous for Jewish students on campus,” said Archie Gottesman, co-founder of JewBelong, a nonprofit that fights antisemitism. “It’s terrifying.” The group’s truck, which bore the message “Let’s be clear. Hamas is your problem too,” was on the GWU campus Wednesday after traveling to Washington for the pro-Israel rally.

“The university is aware of reports of the vandalization of a pro-Jewish and anti-Hamas mobile billboard sponsored by an outside organization that was parked on a public street on campus,” a GWU spokeswoman wrote in an email. City and campus police have responded, she wrote.

In a statement Oct. 25, the day after the pro-Palestinian images were projected on the building, GWU President Ellen M. Granberg denounced the act, which she said included “antisemitic phrases that have caused fear and anxiety for many members of our Jewish and broader GW community, and we wholly denounce this type of conduct.”

Leaders of the campus chapter of SJP and the national organization did not immediately respond to requests for comment Wednesday. But on social media, students were signaling their next moves: They announced the formation of GW Student Coalition for Palestine “to facilitate and continue the work of the movement for Palestinian liberation” and a protest on campus. The group said the SJP chapter was not involved in the action.

Later Wednesday, while banging pans and cheering, a group of protesters held cardboard and paper signs such as “Let us mourn” and waved Palestinian flags. In front of the library, masked protesters chanted, “Israel is a racist state,” “End the occupation now” and “From the sea to the river.”

And then to huge cheers and applause, a student in a kaffiyeh shouted through a megaphone, their voice hoarse: “SJP! SJP! SJP!” A masked speaker shouted, “The student movement will not be silenced!”

The group then marched toward the university president’s house.

The suspension of SJP at the university follows similar moves on several other campuses nationally as tensions flare amid the Israel-Gaza war.

Columbia University announced last week that it was suspending its campus chapter of SJP and another student organization, Jewish Voice for Peace, through the end of the semester. The university cited the groups’ repeated violations of university policies for campus events, including an unauthorized demonstration this month that included threatening rhetoric and intimidation.

On Tuesday night, at a demonstration organized to protest the suspensions, organizers announced a coalition of dozens of groups, Columbia University Apartheid Divest.

Maryam Alwan, a Students for Justice in Palestine member, said in the statement that the coalition had spread from undergraduates to all of Columbia's schools. "I hope this is a sign to universities and hostile forces across the country that the more you suppress and attack students," Alwan said, "the stronger and louder they will become."

At Brandeis University in Massachusetts, officials announced last week that the university would no longer recognize its campus chapter of SJP. "This decision was made because SJP openly supports Hamas, which the United States has designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, and its call for the violent elimination of Israel and the Jewish people," Ronald D. Liebowitz, the university's president, wrote in a message to campus. He said that the school is "dedicated to ensuring free speech" but that the university's policy allows restriction of speech "that constitutes a genuine threat or harassment."

University leaders have grappled with how best to respond to the intense protests. University of California President Michael V. Drake announced new initiatives Wednesday to improve campus climate, safety and support of students amid flaring tensions over the war and "alarming acts of bigotry, intolerance, and intimidation" on the system's 10 campuses. The \$7 million investment will include new emergency mental health services and education on issues such as how to recognize and combat extremism.

New York University also announced plans to create a Center for the Study of Antisemitism, funded by a recent seven-figure donation, to examine and combat bigotry.

At GWU, the suspension of Students for Justice in Palestine was first reported by the campus newspaper, the Hatchet. The newspaper quoted an unnamed SJP representative as expressing disappointment but not surprise, characterizing GWU's action as part of a growing wave of backlash and repressions against the Palestinian student movement.

In its statement, the university said the actions of the Palestinian advocacy group "violated university policies," including guidelines for use of the library building, which is on the university's campus in Foggy Bottom.

The advocacy group refused at first to comply with directives from GWU officials to stop the projections, the university said. GWU did not give further details of the policies with which SJP failed to comply. A campus spokesman said Tuesday night that he could not provide the details.

The university has prohibited SJP from participating in activities on campus. Under the suspension, GWU said, SJP can't sponsor or organize activities on campus or use university facilities for the next 90 days. The university also prohibited SJP from posting communications on university property through May 20.

National Students for Justice in Palestine said Monday on social media that campuses across the country have been targets of censorship and similar actions. The group said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that "we will not be silenced."



Post



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100+ WALKOUTS FOR PALESTINE

- San Francisco State University | 1:00 PM @ Malcolm X Plaza
- Sarah Lawrence College | 12:30 PM @ South Lawn
- Smith College | 1:40 PM @ College Hall
- St Olaf College | 10 - 11:20 AM @ Virtual -- request link from SJP St Olaf college
- St. Catherine University | 3:00 PM @ Quad near CDC
- St. Francis University
- Stanford University | 1:45 PM @ Memorial Church
- State University of New York
- SUNY Binghamton | 11:30 AM-1:30 PM @ Pegasus Statue
- Swarthmore College | 12:15 PM @ Kohlberg Courtyard
- Temple University | 11:30 AM @ Bell Tower
- Tufts University | 2:30 PM @ Olin Hall
- UC Berkeley | 12:30 PM @ Sproul Plaza
- UC Irvine | 12:30 PM @ Flagpoles
- UC Riverside | 12:30 @ Hinderaker
- UC San Diego | 5:00 PM @ Sun God Lawn
- UC Santa Barbara | 12:00 PM @ SRB to Arbor
- UC Santa Cruz | 11:30 AM @ Quarry
- UCLA | 2:00 PM @ Bruin Plaza
- University of Central Florida
- University of Central Oklahoma | 10:30 AM under the blue tent
- University of Chicago | 12:00 PM @ Center of the Quad
- University of Colorado Boulder | 11:30 AM @ UMC Fountain Court
- University of Delaware
- University of Florida | 5:00 PM @ 13th & University
- University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
- University of Illinois at Chicago | 12:30 PM @ Quad
- University of Louisville | 2:15 PM @ the B^B



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[wearedissenters](#) TOMORROW WE WALKOUT

What We Know About the Americans Missing or Killed in the Attack on Israel

Officials said 30 U.S. citizens were killed, and 13 remained unaccounted for, though it was unclear how many were being held hostage.

By Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Roni Rabin and Corey Kilgannon

Published Oct. 11, 2023 Updated Oct. 20, 2023

Families in the United States and Israel continued to pray for their loved ones who were missing in the wake of the brutal Hamas assault that began on Oct. 7 and killed more than 1,400 people, including at least 30 American citizens, according to U.S. officials.

The slain Americans included an “idealist” who saved her son from assailants’ bullets and a nurse from California who had moved to Israel to care for her parents.

U.S. officials said on Sunday that at least 13 Americans remained unaccounted for in Israel, but it was not clear how many were being held hostage by Hamas, the Palestinian group that controls Gaza and carried out the attacks.

President Biden pledged to put all efforts into finding and rescuing the missing. “I have not given up hope of bringing these folks home,” he told Jewish leaders in a meeting at the White House last week. Officials said they were in touch with the families of the missing and keeping them updated.

The missing Americans included a mother and daughter from the Chicago area who were visiting relatives in Israel when the assailants struck, a recent high school graduate from Long Island, and a 23-year-old attending a large music festival that came under attack from Hamas — and whose family now believes may be badly injured.

Here is what we know about them.

Missing Americans

Omer Neutra



Omer Neutra had been interested in peace-building, his father said.

Omer Neutra, 22, grew up on Long Island. An avid athlete and popular student, he loved sports — especially the New York Knicks — and his big group of friends, his parents said.

After a gap year spent in Israel in 2020, during which he volunteered to help children with special needs, Mr. Neutra joined the Israeli military. From his post on the Gaza border on the night before the attacks, he told his parents by phone that things seemed calm.

“Then all hell broke loose, and we haven’t spoken to him since,” said his mother, Orna Neutra. The family believes he was abducted by Hamas.

Mr. Neutra was interested in peace-building, said his father, Ronen Neutra, and looked forward to returning to Long Island and college.

“He was planning to come back,” his father said, “and we want him back.”

The family’s synagogue, Midway Jewish Center, released a statement from his parents on Thursday that described Mr. Neutra as a “great son, friend, and a passionate, giving person.”

Hersh Goldberg-Polin



Hersh Goldberg-Polin was at a music festival near Gaza.

Rachel Goldberg said she woke up on Oct. 7 in Jerusalem to the sound of sirens warning of incoming rocket fire. Her 23-year-old son, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, was at a music festival near Gaza’s border. When she turned her phone on 10 minutes later, she saw two consecutive text messages from him that read “I love you” and “I’m sorry.”

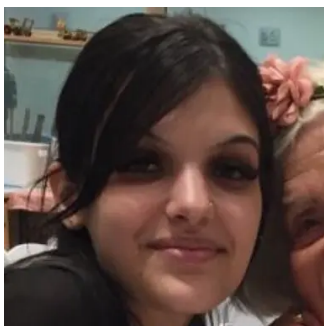
Mrs. Goldberg — who moved with her family from California to Jerusalem in 2008 — has not heard from her son since. She said last week that the only thing the police could tell her was that his last known cellphone signal was near the border with Gaza.

Members of Mr. Goldberg-Polin’s family say they have since pieced together at least some of what happened to him, and believe he is in desperate need of medical attention because part of his arm was blown off by a grenade. Read more about his story.

Judith and Natalie Raanan



Judith Raanan and her daughter were visiting relatives in a kibbutz less than a mile from the Israel-Gaza border.



Natalie Raanan had recently graduated from high school.

For Judith Raanan and her teenage daughter, Natalie, the voyage to Israel that began in September was abundant with meaning, a trip to celebrate the Jewish holidays and the 85th birthday of Judith’s mother at a kibbutz in the south of the country.

But then, Israel was so fundamental to their lives and family — both mother and daughter have deep ties there, while making their home in the Chicago suburbs — that the visit was more an evocation of things familiar than a landmark exploration of something new.

That celebration was transformed into an unimaginably dark and violent nightmare. When Hamas terrorists invaded Israel in a surprise assault, they swept into the kibbutz where Judith and Natalie were staying, less than a mile from the Gaza border. According to relatives, Natalie and Judith tried to hide in a shelter, but they disappeared in the chaos and are believed to have been taken hostage by attackers.

Family members in Israel were told on Friday that the pair were in Gaza, but that it was not known whether they were dead or alive.

At a vigil Thursday evening in Evanston, Ill., a short distance from the Raanan home, a group of relatives and friends watched a video message from Judith Raanan’s sister, Saray Cohen, who lives in Israel. “Their only crime was being Jewish,” Ms. Cohen said.

Sagui Dekel-Chen



Sagui Dekel-Chen was one of the first people to begin warning families of the Hamas attack, according to his father.

Sagui Dekel-Chen, 35, grew up on a kibbutz in Israel, but he frequently visited his father’s family in Connecticut — enough to turn him into a rabid Boston Red Sox fan.

Early on Oct. 7, as the kibbutz near the Gaza border was overrun with hundreds of armed attackers, Mr. Dekel-Chen hurried his pregnant wife, Avital, and their two young daughters into a bomb shelter, then rigged its armored door to keep it locked, said his father, Jonathan Dekel-Chen, 60.

The elder Dekel-Chen, a Connecticut native who moved to the kibbutz as a young man, said his son was one of the first people to begin warning families of the attack and fighting the terrorists off. “For hours, they did whatever they could to protect their families and the community,” he said.

But when Israeli military forces repelled the attackers later Saturday, Sagui and the other villagers who had fought back were gone. Some of their cellphones were later traced to Gaza, but their whereabouts remain unknown.

Itay Chen

Ruby Chen said his 19-year-old son, Itay, who was serving in the Israeli Army, had been missing since the Oct. 7 attack. He pleaded with President Biden and Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken to “do what they can to make this end for us as soon as possible.”

Among the Slain

Deborah Martias

In her final moments, Deborah Martias, who was born in Missouri and whose father is a longtime professor at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, covered her teenage son with her own body to protect him, her relatives told several news outlets last week.

In the moments before she and her husband, Shlomi Martias, were killed by the assailants who burst into the family’s home, Ms. Martias was on the phone with her father, Ilan Troen, he recounted in a televised interview. Mr. Troen said that his daughter had heard glass breaking, gunshots and people speaking in Arabic.

Her 16-year-old son, Rotem, was shot in the stomach but survived, hiding until he could be rescued.

Mr. Troen described his daughter and son-in-law as “idealists.” They lived at Kibbutz Holit, a small community just over a mile from Gaza, and had sent their children to a school that taught both Hebrew and Arabic, he said, in the hope that better understanding between Jews and Arabs could “change the course of history here.”

Hayim Katsman

A peace activist, Hayim Katsman was initially believed to have been taken hostage on Oct. 7 but was later found killed in his home on Kibbutz Holit. He had studied conservative trends and radicalism within the Zionist religious community, played bass guitar and worked as a D.J. playing Arabic music.

He did gardening and landscaping at the kibbutz, said his mother, Hannah Wacholder Katsman, who described him as “very industrious and independent” in a text message. She said he was born in Israel but had acquired dual citizenship in the United States.

Mr. Katsman recently completed his doctorate at the University of Washington in Seattle, where he served as co-coordinator of a Israel-Palestine research group. His doctorate was titled “Religious nationalism in Israel/Palestine.” It is unusual for Israelis to refer to the region in that way, rather than simply “Israel” or “Israel and the occupied territories.”

Adrienne Neta

Nahar Neta fought back tears at a news conference in Tel Aviv last week as he described being on the phone trying to calm his 66-year-old mother, Adrienne, during the attacks. She was born and raised in California and lived in a kibbutz near the border with Gaza.

As assailants broke into her home in Be’eri, Mr. Neta said, his siblings who were on the phone with her at the time heard screaming.

That was the last the family heard from Ms. Neta. Her son told a television channel in California on Thursday that the Israeli government had confirmed her death.

Itay Glisko

Itay Glisko, 20, was a dual citizen from Paramus, N.J., who was serving in the Israel Defense Forces when he was killed by Hamas, Gov. Phil Murphy of New Jersey confirmed last week. Mr. Murphy said he was heartbroken.

Eyal Glisko, a cousin of Mr. Glisko's who lives in New Jersey, told The Daily Beast that Mr. Glisko's family had moved to Israel when he was very young, and that he had joined the military at the age of 18 as part of the country's mandatory service.

"He was doing his duty, that's it," Eyal Glisko said.

Daniel Ben-Senior

A nurse whom her family described as an "angel," Daniel Ben-Senior, 34, was born in California but moved to Israel to help take care of her parents.

She was attending the music festival that was attacked by Hamas on Oct. 7, and was originally considered among the missing. Israeli authorities told her family on Wednesday that she had been shot, said her cousin, Ran Ben-Senior, who lives in New York.

"It's a nightmare," he said.

Reporting was contributed by Peter Baker, Anna Betts, Colbi Edmonds, Nadav Gavrielov, Jaevon Williams, Edward Wong and Hiba Yazbek. Kirsten Noyes contributed research.

Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs reports on national news. He is from upstate New York and previously reported in Baltimore, Albany, and Isla Vista, Calif. More about Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs

Corey Kilgannon is a Metro reporter covering news and human interest stories. He was also part of the team that won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize for breaking news. More about Corey Kilgannon

EXPLAINER

Why 2 Holocaust scholars think comparisons with the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre are valid

Academics find similarities between the Nazis and Hamas in their ideological desire to kill Jews, their indoctrination and the methods they used

By AVINOAM PATT and LIAT STEIR-LIVNY

9 December 2023, 10:27 am



Israeli soldiers at the forensic center in the Shura military base near Ramle, where hundreds of dead bodies arrived since the October 7 Hamas onslaught, October 24, 2023. (Yossi Aloni/Flash90)

THE CONVERSATION via AP — Many observers have referred to the massacre of Israelis by Hamas on October 7, 2023, as the deadliest attack against the Jewish people in a single day “since the Holocaust.”

As scholars who have spent decades studying the history of Israel’s relationship with the Holocaust, we have argued that the Holocaust should remain unique and not be compared with other atrocities. We have written against simplistic Holocaust analogies, like comparing mask and vaccine mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic to the Nazi persecution of the Jews, or the practice of labeling political opponents “Nazis.” Both seem to trivialize the memory of what is known as the Shoah, the Hebrew word for “catastrophe.”

But the October 7 massacres perpetrated by Hamas changed our thinking.

AD 1/2



Israeli identity and the Holocaust

Over the past 75 years, the collective memory of the Shoah has assumed a central place in Israeli national identity. The memory of the Holocaust has increasingly become the prism through which Israelis understand both their past and their present relationships with the Arab and Muslim world.

Israelis saw the Holocaust's threat of annihilation echoed in many situations. In 1967, there was the waiting period before the Six Day War, when the Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser threatened to "wipe Israel off the map." It was there in the trauma of the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and the unexpected, simultaneous attacks by Egypt and Syria. When Israel destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1981, Prime Minister Menachem Begin justified it with the explanation that "there won't be another Holocaust in history."

This association has only strengthened in the past 40 years with the 1982 Lebanon war, two Palestinian uprisings, known as intifadas, and with the present threat posed by a nuclear Iran.

All these events evoke the memory of the Holocaust and are understood within the collective memory of threats of annihilation. This phenomenon represents, for many Israelis, an inability to separate their current situation from the vulnerability of the diaspora Jewish past. And this conflation of past and present continues to play a central role in Israeli politics, foreign policy and public discourse.



A group of Polish Jews are led away for deportation by German SS soldiers, during the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto by German troops after an uprising in the Jewish quarter, in 1943. (AP Photo)

The frequent comparisons between the October 7 massacres and the Shoah are more, we believe, than just the default associations of a people submerged in Holocaust postmemory, which refers to inherited and imagined memories of subsequent generations who did not personally experience the trauma. In seeking to describe the depths of evil they witnessed on October 7, Israelis were making more than just an emotional connection between the Holocaust and the October 7 massacres when some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed in their homes and at a music festival and some 240 taken hostage.

To help explain the logic of that connection, specific and reasonable comparisons can be made to better understand Hamas' traumatic and devastating massacre of Israelis. Below are a few of the many parallels:

1. Ideology and identification

Just as the Nazis aimed to annihilate the Jews, Hamas and affiliated terrorist organizations share the same objective: the destruction of Jews. The 1988 Hamas charter refers to "Jews" and not "Israelis" when calling for the destruction of these people.

While the 2017 Hamas covenant states that Hamas does not seek war with the Jews, but instead "wages a struggle against the Zionists who occupy Palestine," the slaughter of Jews – many of whom were peace activists – in October has proven otherwise.

The national struggle of Hamas is predicated upon the conquest of land and elimination of the Jews. Hamas officials have subsequently promised to repeat October 7 again and again until Israel is annihilated.



Members of the Hamas terror group's military wing stand on an Israeli flag in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on May 27, 2021, as Hamas claims victory following an 11-day conflict with Israel. (Said Khatib/AFP)

2. Indoctrination

While the racial antisemitism of the Nazi regime differs from the antisemitism employed in the fundamentalist Islamic version of Hamas, antisemitism is a key part of the struggle for both ideologies. Indoctrination from an early age aimed at the dehumanization of the Jews is a key part of both how Nazis taught young German students during the Third Reich and in how Hamas educates children in Gaza.

3. Methods of killing and survival

The horrors of October 7 echo the brutal tactics Nazis used during the Holocaust, including not only murder but cruel humiliation of the victims. The testimonies of October 7 survivors reveal the torture of parents and children, sometimes in front of each other, including rape and sexual violence, mocking and lingering in the murder process as the terrorists relished the atrocities they committed.

When the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto realized that the end was near, they worked for months to prepare hiding places for themselves in their homes and created improvised bunkers, doing whatever they could to avoid capture and deportation. They did not imagine that the Nazis would come to eliminate the ghetto in a different way, entering the ghetto with flamethrowers and burning down one building after another. Some Jews were burned alive, while others fled outside and fell into the hands of the Nazis.

On October 7, victims in the kibbutzim and communities near Gaza hid in fortified safe rooms designed to protect them from rocket attacks. Hamas terrorists went from house to house, burning one after the other so that inhabitants would be forced to flee from their protected shelters. Others were burned in their homes.



Israeli soldiers remove bodies of Israeli civilians in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, near the Israeli-Gaza border in southern Israel, October 10, 2023. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

4. Using Jews in the killing process

On October 7, Hamas terrorists took a hostage from Nahal Oz, one of the kibbutzim in the south, and forced him to go from house to house to knock on doors and lure his neighbors outside. Afterward, they murdered him. Holocaust scholars have described such episodes from World War II in which Jews were forced to cooperate as “choiceless choices.”

5. Terminology

The word Shoah is used in the Bible to describe danger from neighboring nations, signifying distress, pain, torment, calamity and a “day of destruction.” While it later came to define the total Nazi extermination of Jews in the 1940s, multiple testimonies collected from survivors of the October 7 massacres use the term once again today, echoing the biblical definition, to signal a day of desolation, darkness, destruction and gloom.

The words used to describe events are often loaded with emotional associations; the power and meaning of words that attempt to convey the depths of traumatic experiences cannot be discounted.

Not the same

There is a difference between pointing out similarities and creating shallow comparisons. We are aware of the tendency, especially in the political sphere, to resort to simplistic, symbolic and performative comparisons to the Holocaust – such as Israel’s ambassador to the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, donning a yellow star with the words “Never Again” on October 31.



Israel's UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan wears a yellow Star of David that reads 'Never Again', as he addresses members of the UN Security Council at United Nations headquarters, October 30, 2023. (AP/Eduardo Munoz Alvarez)

October 7 is not the same as the Holocaust. Even so, we can use the study of the Holocaust to understand the traumatic and devastating encounters between Hamas terrorists and their victims on October 7.

It might be a trivialization of the Holocaust to simply label Hamas as the “new Nazis,” but our analysis reveals that recognizing their eliminationist antisemitism means there can be no return to the pre-October 7 status quo, when Israel’s policy was to accommodate Hamas’s control of the Gaza Strip.

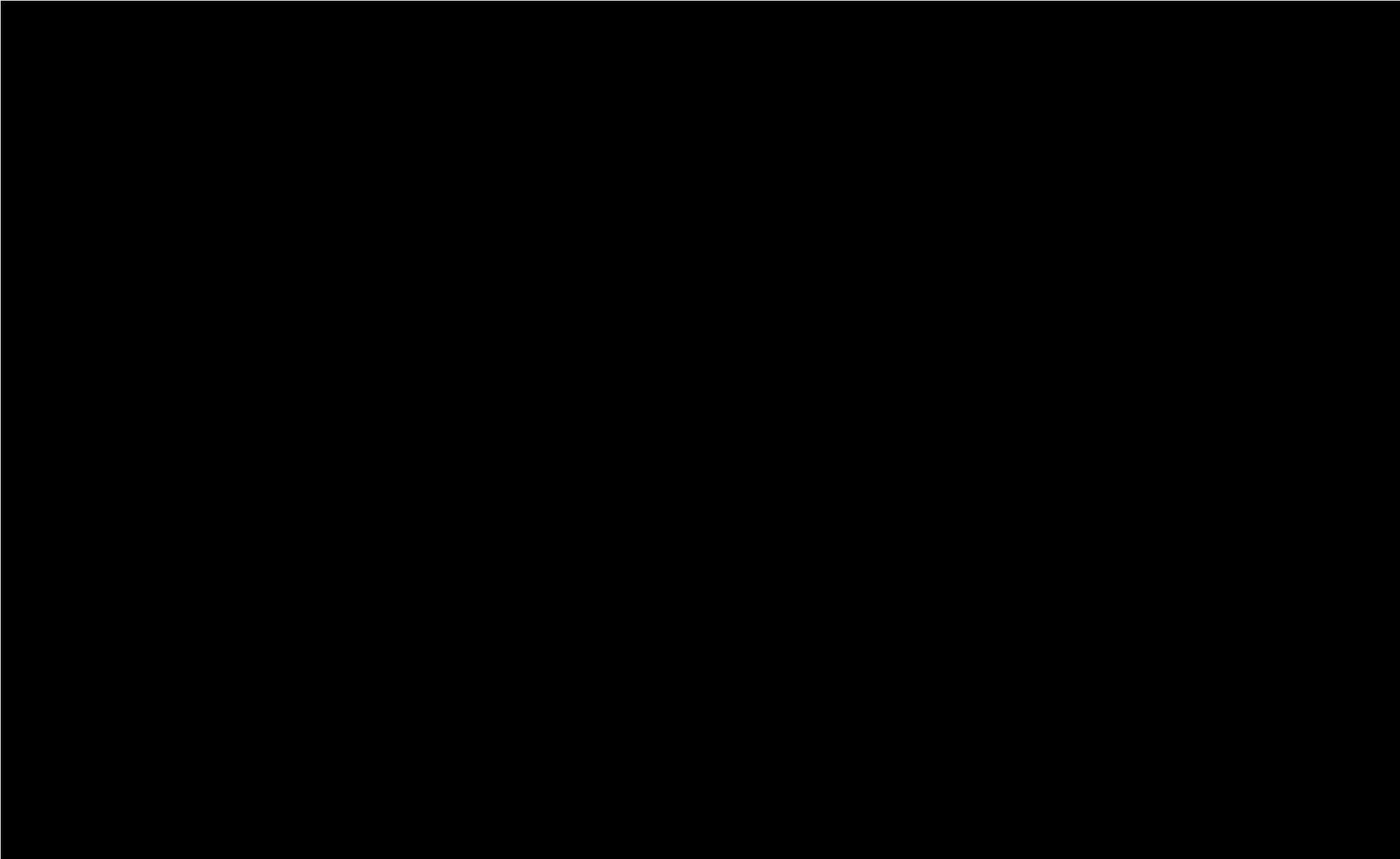
Despite the natural tendency to turn away from the most shocking and the most horrific manifestations of human evil, there are times when gazes must not be averted, when horror must be confronted in order to understand the motivations of the perpetrators and the responses of the victims and the survivors.

In this case, at what point do we ignore analogies that seem deliberate and intentional? As Holocaust scholars, we recognize why Israelis are stuck – and struck – by the traumatic nature of October 7.

Times of Israel Staff contributed to this report

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From: Kamoutsas, Stasi <Stasi.Kamoutsas@eog.myflorida.com>
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 2:26 PM
To: Rodrigues, Ray <Ray.Rodrigues@flbog.edu>; bdlamb76@hotmail.com

Cc: Alex.Kelly <Alex.Kelly@eog.myflorida.com>

Subject: Concerning Allegations at USF

Please see the attached.

Anastasios Kamoutsas
Deputy Chief of Staff
Office of Governor Ron DeSantis

Please note that under Florida law correspondence sent to the Governor's Office, which is not confidential or exempt pursuant to chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes, is a public record made available upon request.

Empty Chairs Broken Hearts Incident

Thursday, November 16th, 2023

On Thursday, November 16th, USF Hillel, in collaboration with two other Jewish Student Organizations, organized its first on-campus event since October 7th. Titled "Empty Chairs, Broken Hearts," the event aimed to promote peaceful hostage solidarity. Throughout the program, students were deeply moved, comforted, and expressed gratitude. The event was under constant monitoring by the USF administration.

Towards the end of the event, a male student approached me with inquiries about its focus, particularly regarding the 240+ chairs, each symbolizing a hostage with an attached flyer. After repeating his questions, he began to scream at me about the 10,000 people being murdered in Gaza.

In response, I promptly sought assistance from the two administrators overseeing the event, Mike Severy (USF's Director of the Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement) and Darci Hyppolite (USF's MSC Conference and Events Manager), requesting the removal of the student. Despite my request, they initially did not intervene and even chuckled for a brief period. Eventually, Mike Severy got up and stood by the individual causing the disturbance.

Approximately 8 minutes into the altercation, Danielle McDonald, the Dean of Students, Winston Jones, the Assistant Dean of Students, Christopher Daniel, USF's Chief of Police, and several USFPD officers arrived. Unfortunately, none of them took action to stop the harassment. As the situation escalated, the crowd of instigators grew. The only response from the Dean was to have them relocate to the other side of the sidewalk, where they continued to express inflammatory statements and blood libels.

This incident lasted for approximately 20 minutes.

Nothing was done to stop the harassment.

Two instigators were heard saying the following:

- Jews are the fruit of the poisoned tree
- Jews are committing a Holocaust
- Jewish women were not raped
- Jewish babies were not murdered
- Netanyahu started Hamas
- Jews lived well in Arab countries
- Jews are colonizers
- Jews are committing Genocide
- Long live the Intifada

Moreover, I conveyed to USF Administrators Darci Hyppolite and Jacqueline Farley that "this was how it started in the 1930s," and their reaction was to laugh.

 **Maor Elbaz-Starinsky**  
@ElbazStarinsky

Jewish students at @USouthFlorida attacked during a "Empty Chairs, Broken Hearts" hostage solidarity event, commemorating the victims and hostages of the HAMAS October 7th attack on @Israel.

The administration saw the whole thing and did NOTHING.

@USouthFlorida it's time to admit you have serious issues on campus and in your decision making process.
You compromise and disregard your Jewish students sense of security.

This is a disgrace.

Gloves off.

Students, donors, staff - DM me.



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