



May 30, 2017

Chancellor Howard Gillman
University of California, Irvine
The Chancellor's Office
510 Aldrich Hall
Irvine, CA 92697-1900

Dear Chancellor Gillman:

We have been encouraged by UCI's early commitment to aligning its policies and practices with the UC Regents' Principles against Intolerance. UCI's Higher Ground report makes great effort towards ensuring a safe and welcoming campus culture and climate. It is therefore disheartening that we must express deep concern about the university's handling of the most recent disruption by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) on UCI's campus on Wednesday evening, May 10. We are sure you note that this incident marks the third time since 2010 that SJP, or its predecessor, the Muslim Student Union, have caused disruption to an Israel program on the UCI campus that has necessitated a full conduct investigation (there have been other disruptions as well). Moreover, this latest incident occurred nearly one year ago to the date from when SJP disrupted the screening of "Beneath the Helmet," and involved some of the same students who participated in last year's disruption. It is unsettling to see that so soon after termination of their recent suspension, the students continue efforts to harass Jewish and pro-Israel students by seeking to shut down their events and by shouting loud, threatening chants of hateful and demonizing slogans that have the intended effect of making Jewish students and those with a connection to Israel feel intimidated and marginalized on their own campus.

We understand that, as with two of the previous disruptions, UCI Police had to be called to intervene. While Assistant Vice Chancellor Edgar Dormitorio was present during this latest disruption and is able to provide an eye witness account, we want to alert you that in the time that has transpired since the disruption, students and faculty present at the event have complained to us that they have not been asked to provide a statement to the Conduct Office, who is charged with conducting the investigation. The unacceptably slow nature of the investigation is causing great loss of confidence in the process within the Jewish community, particularly since it seems to be a repetition of last year's process, in which the pro-Israel student witnesses were only interviewed as many as six weeks after the incident, and only following multiple demands from the students and community.

We are also troubled by the behavior by some of UCI's student leadership because at least three of the disrupters on May 10 were identified as members of student government. We are deeply concerned that their participation violates UCI Senate's Code of Ethics, including the obligation that student senators "Maintain the highest standards of performance, conduct, and cooperation with our fellow students, faculty, staff, and co-workers." Additionally, participation in the disruption of an event coordinated by a student organization seems to violate Clause 7 of the Standards of Conduct, "No officer of ASUCI shall engage in any conduct unbecoming of a representative of the student body."

Also deeply troubling is the fact that the day following the disruption, SJP leadership openly boasted about their disruptive behavior. This occurred simultaneously while SJP was also promoting and

participating in their anti-Israel event, “Anti-Zionism Week,” on Ring Road. The disrupters also bragged about their intentional disrespect for the UCI Administration’s warning not to disrupt, and asserted their intention to continue to disrupt events whose speakers they oppose, in total disregard of university rules and the free speech rights of others. This was caught on video and can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f3Kzd4TeZI&t=50s>.

We particularly call your attention to minute 1:30 of the video when an SJP student says:

“And last night we went to disrupt their event, to let them know that we refuse to allow the normalization of their presence here. Administration told us not to disrupt. Last year, on May 18, we shut down an IDF panel, we shut down their panel ...”. (at 1:03 of the video)

This video, including the threat to continue to disrupt Israel events, and the fact that the presence of a UCI administrator did not dissuade SJP from engaging in disruptive behavior, strongly indicate that the slap on the hand they received for last year’s disruption had no impact on SJPs behavior, and that the likelihood of another incident in the absence of sincere discipline is great.

In light of the many conversations we have had with the UCI administration regarding efforts to improve campus climate, we are confident that you share our commitment to ensuring that all UCI students, including Jewish students and those with a connection to Israel, are free from intimidation, threats and harassment, and that the integrity of these Jewish events is respected and protected. Nonetheless the disturbingly slow pace of the university’s investigation creates tension between its expressed commitment and its actions.

Hillel is committed to freedom of expression for all students and to supporting Jewish life on campus by helping students create strong connections to Jewish life, learning and Israel. Hillel International and Orange County Hillel continue to hope to work with the university to find ways to create a welcoming space for all of your students. In the meantime, the behavior of SJP serves to intimidate and harass students. Evidence suggests these disrupters have violated UCI’s policies and seek to create an atmosphere on campus that is divisive and that would inhibit learning, growth and the free exchange of ideas. We therefore ask that you conduct a swift and thorough investigation and enforce violations of campus policy.

Respectfully,

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