

Letter to Binghamton University President

President Harvey G. Stenger
Binghamton University
State University of New York
4400 Vestal Parkway East
Binghamton, NY 13902

October 28, 2014

Dear President Stenger,

We represent 15 organizations with hundreds of thousands of members and supporters nationwide, who are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of Jewish students on campuses across the country. We have particular concerns about Jewish students on your campus, based on the marginalizing, intimidating and bigoted tactics that we have reason to believe may be used against them by Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), a student group established at Binghamton University (BU) less than one year ago.

We were recently made aware of an on-line document entitled "[Declaration of Principles and Strategies](#)". The document purports to be "a collection and elucidation of several resolutions and collective decisions formulated and approved by the membership of Binghamton University Students for Justice in Palestine." It outlines "principles and strategies" generally agreed upon by the BU SJP membership.

As a foundational document of a student group at your university, the "Declaration of Principles and Strategies" is extremely troubling. The SJP's document outlines a strategy for targeting, ostracizing, harassing, and silencing students on your campus who oppose the boycott of Israel or who support or simply attend a program or event with which the SJP disagrees.

In a section entitled "With Regards to SJP's Interaction with Zionist Student Organizations," the document prohibits SJP leaders and members from collaborating or cooperating with eight specifically-named Jewish and pro-Israel student organizations. Going further, the "Declaration" prohibits collaboration even with any group that has "aided and abetted Zionist student organizations." The SJP's goal is crystal clear: to single out Jewish and pro-Israel student groups, isolate them, and cut them off from other student groups in the university community.

Although a student organization is certainly free to choose its partners for collaboration and cooperation, the BU SJP group's *a priori* rejection of any interaction with Jewish and pro-Israel student groups – or with any other groups that is deemed to have "collaborated" with them – bespeaks of prejudice, bigotry, and a lack of tolerance and civility, violating BU's commitment to being "an inclusive community within a framework of academic freedom and respect."

Far more troubling, however, is the section of the document entitled "With Regards to Tactics and Strategies Used to Counter Zionist Normalization," which spells out a strategy for not only protesting certain student events, but also for actually disrupting them, simply because the SJP disagrees with the views that might be expressed there. Particularly troubling is the go-ahead given to SJP members to employ any other tactic and strategy, provided that the tactic or strategy is "within the bounds of what is not widely considered to be legally reprehensible." One can only imagine what the SJP might deem acceptable and not "widely considered to be legally reprehensible."

As you are well aware, in calling for the disruption of other student groups' on-campus events, the SJP is advocating behavior that violates BU's Student Code of Conduct, which repeatedly emphasizes BU's objective to be "a richly diverse and inclusive community." (See <http://www.binghamton.edu/student-handbook/rules.pdf>.) Consistent with that goal, the Code requires all members of the BU community to "conduct themselves lawfully, maturely and respectfully. . . . Conduct that interferes with or threatens the rights of others, either in or out of the classroom, or interferes with or prohibits the operation of the University, is not condoned."

In addition, while acknowledging First Amendment freedoms, the Code rightly makes it clear that those freedoms cannot be exercised at the expense of the rights of others, noting that "abusing the rights of any one person or group ultimately endangers the rights of all." Accordingly, the Code specifically prohibits "disorderly or disruptive conduct that interferes with the normal operations of the University or infringes on the rights of others" – exactly the kind of conduct that the SJP is apparently encouraging its members to engage in.

Besides encouraging behavior that violates the letter and spirit of BU's Student Code of Conduct, the SJP may well be inciting criminal conduct in violation of New York State law. Sec. 240.20 of the New York Penal Law outlaws "disorderly conduct," which includes "without lawful authority, . . . disturb[ing] any lawful assembly or meeting of persons."

The SJP's apparent plans at BU are already being carried out by this group on campuses across the country, resulting in dozens of Jewish and pro-Israel students' events being disrupted and causing these students to feel harassed and intimidated. (See [HERE](#) for a sample of Israel-related events that have been disrupted by SJP students on more than 20 U.S. campuses.) According to the Anti-Defamation League, the explicit purpose of the SJP's "anti-Zionist normalization" campaigns is to delegitimize all pro-Israel perspectives and actively suppress their expression on college campuses. (See <http://www.adl.org/israel-international/anti-israel-activity/c/anto-normalization-campaign.html>).

We urge you to review the SJP's "Declaration of Principles and Strategies" and consider the implications if they are carried out on your campus. Given the alarming upsurge in anti-Semitism around the world and right here in the U.S., it is crucial that the behavior of this group be carefully monitored. We urge you to ensure that the SJP upholds BU's goal of diversity and inclusiveness, that the group's conduct conforms to university policy and the law, and that the SJP does not threaten or infringe on the rights of other members of your university community.

Sincerely,

Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)
AMCHA Initiative
American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
David Horowitz Freedom Center
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Hasbara Fellowships
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
National Conference on Jewish Affairs
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Simon Wiesenthal Center
StandWithUs

The Lawfare Project
Zionist Organization of America

Cc: SUNY Chancellor Nancy L. Zimpher
SUNY Board of Trustees
NY Board of Regents Chancellor Merryl H. Tisch
NY Board of Regents Vice Chancellor Anthony S. Bottar
NY State Senate Education Committee Chair John J. Flanagan
NY State Assembly Education Committee Chair Catherine Nolan
NY State Senator Tom Libous (District 52)
NY State Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (District 123)
NY State Comptroller Thomas P DiNapoli
Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
U.S. Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand
U.S. Senator Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Congressman Richard L. Hanna (NY District 22)