

VIA EMAIL

September 1, 2015

Dear President Napolitano and Regents,

We are 128 faculty members at the University of California who are deeply disturbed by the alarming increase in anti-Semitic activity that we are witnessing on UC campuses. We firmly believe that a critical step in addressing this escalating problem is for the University of California to adopt the State Department definition of anti-Semitism, which accurately identifies the contemporary manifestations of this age-old hatred.

The State Department's linkage of certain kinds of anti-Israel expression to anti-Semitism has been affirmed by scholars of contemporary anti-Semitism, virtually every mainstream Jewish communal organization, and by Jewish students themselves, who report being harassed, threatened, assaulted, targeted and discriminated against as a direct result of divisive anti-Israel activity on their campuses.

For example, in the wake of virulently anti-Israel BDS campaigns that were accompanied by egregious acts of anti-Semitism on several UC campuses this past year, Jewish students reported:

"I no longer feel as though UC Davis is a completely safe environment for Jewish students or a place where I can feel free to express my support for Israel." – UC Davis

"These attacks on my identity and rights to self-determination have not only affected me emotionally, but have had devastating effects on my academics and have hindered my purpose on this campus – to be a student." – UCLA

"For the first time in my life, I felt that my identity, an unchangeable part of who I am, was under attack... I don't wear that star of David necklace anymore. I don't tell most people that I'm Jewish, and I definitely don't tell them that I'm pro-Israel...I'm scared for my safety." – UC Santa Barbara

In recognition of the undeniable connection between certain forms of anti-Israel expression and acts of anti-Semitism, student governments on 3 UC campuses — UC Berkeley, UCLA, and UC Santa Barbara — unanimously approved resolutions adopting the State Department definition.

As academics, we recognize that the robust exchange of ideas is a cornerstone of our University, and we fully respect the freedom of speech and academic freedom of all members of the campus community. We firmly reject the claim that adopting the State Department definition is in any way opposed to these freedoms of expression.

The State Department definition itself acknowledges that "criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as anti-Semitic," and we wholeheartedly

agree. Moreover, we understand that even speech that crosses the line into anti-Semitism is, in most cases, protected under the First Amendment.

Rather than stifling free speech, adopting the State Department definition will raise awareness about contemporary manifestations of anti-Semitism, provide a tool for identifying and discussing anti-Semitic incidents and encourage further anti-discrimination education. Anti-semitic rhetoric may not be against the law, but it *is* bigotry, and it must be identified and called out with the same promptness and vigor as all other forms bigotry.

We urge you to adopt the State Department definition of anti-Semitism, and to ensure that Jewish students are afforded the same protections as all other students at the University of California.

Sincerely,

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Amit Peles, UCLA, Contributor
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Brian Kaye, UC San Francisco, Professor
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Harold Burger, UC Davis, Professor
Harold Taback, UC San Diego, Lecturer
Harry Rubin, UC Berkeley, Professor
Haya Rubin, UC San Francisco, Assistant Professor (Former)
Helene Lipton, UC San Francisco, Professor
I. Schuller, UC San Diego, Distinguished Professor
Ilan Benjamin, UC Santa Cruz, Professor
Irene Litvan, UC San Diego, Professor
Iris Firstenberg, UCLA, Professor
Isaac Kaplan, UCLA, Emeritus Professor
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Jack F. Kirsch, UC Berkeley, Professor of the Graduate School
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Louis Bouchard, UCLA, Assistant Professor
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Marci Reiss, UC San Diego, Guest lecturer
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