



May 30, 2017

VIA E-MAIL (chancellor@uci.edu)

Chancellor Howard Gillman
University of California – Irvine
Office of the Chancellor
510 Aldrich Hall
Irvine, CA 92697

RE: Disruption of Students Supporting Israel Event at UC Irvine

Dear Chancellor Gillman,

We write on behalf of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (“LDB”) - a national non-profit legal advocacy organization that works to combat anti-Semitism on college campuses; StandWithUs (“SWU”) - an international, non-profit Israel education organization; and Students Supporting Israel (“SSI”) - an international campus movement that supports the State of Israel, with a chapter of its organization on UC Irvine’s (“UCI”) campus. Our organizations are concerned about yet another aggressive, disruptive protest of an SSI event by the student group, Students for Justice in Palestine (“SJP”). Last year, UCI issued SJP a warning and required them to host an educational program for violating various provisions of § 102 of the Code of Student Conduct. This year, they engaged in nearly identical disruptive behavior inconsistent with this warning, directly mocked and flouted the authority of the UCI administration, and violated several provisions of the UCI Code of Student Conduct. SJP must be disciplined appropriately, in line with UCI policies.

On May 10, 2017, SJP intentionally disrupted an event hosted by SSI, violating numerous provisions of the Student Code of Conduct and the speakers’ First Amendment right to speak. The event featured “Reservists on Duty,” a group of Israeli reservists who visit college campuses to speak about Israel and the actions of its military. The event began around 6pm, and ran smoothly until SJP members and their affiliates (hereinafter “SJP students”) arrived around 7:30pm, during the Q&A. The SSI student organizer invited the SJP students into the room, on the condition that they respected the format of the Q&A session and not disrupt.

Nonetheless, SJP soon began to disrupt, and violated the following Code provisions: § 102.13 - Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures, or other University activities; § 102.14 - Disorderly or lewd conduct; § 102.15 - Participation in a disturbance of the peace or unlawful assembly; § 102.27 - violation of local, state, or federal laws otherwise not covered under these standards of conduct.

The SJP students initially began by asking the panelists questions – provocative questions, but in a civil manner. This quickly transformed into a series of brief interruptions - and clapping in favor of the interruptions – when SJP students were unsatisfied with an answer. These brief interruptions lasted for about 25 minutes, amidst *repeated attempts by the student organizer and Edgar Dormitorio, Chief of Staff for Student Affairs* to ask them to stop. Around 7:55pm, the SJP students began full-on chanting, not allowing the speakers to speak in violation of their free speech rights. For over four minutes they disrupted, chanting: “Israel Israel you cant hide, we charge you with genocide!”; “Israel Israel what do you say, how many people have you killed today”; ““Hey hey, ho ho, these colonizers have got to go”; “When people are occupied, resistance is justified!” and more. We understand that at least three student government members were present at the disruption. The UCI Police Department (“UCIPD”) was called, though the SJP students left the room before the police arrived and instead began their chanting directly outside of the room. When the event attendees left the room about 20 minutes later, escorted by the UCIPD, they were met by continued chanting. One SJP affiliate attempted to reach over to grab at them, but was stopped by a police officer.

The following day, on May 11, 2017, SJP leader Celine Qussiny admitted – bragged – in a megaphone on campus, that SJP purposefully disrupted the event. She shouted,

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 18th, we shut down an IDF panel. We shut down their panel (cheering). And within 24 hours, Howie Gillman, the Chancellor, sent out an email called Crossing the Lines of Civility. (Shame!) The administration told us last night not to disrupt . . .

(See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3f3Kzd4TeZI&t=50s>, beginning at 1:00). Qussiny then continued to talk about how the university placed a sanction on SJP last year for their disruption, among other things, before the rally turned to chanting against the University, Wells Fargo, Chancellor Gillman, and Israel.

While we are committed to freedom of expression for all students, including the right to reasonably protest, SJP’s actions this month have mocked and flouted the authority of the UCI administration, are inconsistent with their warning that just expired, and violate several provisions under § 102 of the UCI Code of Student Conduct.

Last year, the UC Regents’ unanimously approved their “Statement of Principles Against Intolerance,” in which they stated that “Anti-Semitism, anti-semitic forms of anti-Zionism and other forms of discrimination have no place at the University of California.” We were pleased when UCI became the first UC school to announce the creation of a committee to

align these principles with UCI policies. Last Fall, UCI's Vice Provost for Academic Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Douglas M. Haynes released the report, "Higher Ground: The Alignment of UCI's Policies, Principles, and Practices with the UC Regents' Principles Against Intolerance," which mentioned how "UCI has formulated and implemented a broad range of programs and initiatives to build a campus community where all expect equity, support diversity and practice inclusion. An overarching goal of these programs is to ensure that students can participate in all aspects of campus life in without fearing for their safety. While this institutional commitment aligns with the UC Regents' Principles Against Intolerance, the ongoing experience of UCI's Jewish students calls for the campus to take additional steps to fully address the Regents specific concerns with anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic forms of anti-Zionism."

It is quite clear that more must be done.

In order to prevent SJP from engaging in this type of discriminatory and disruptive behavior again against Jewish and pro-Israel students, the university needs to seriously discipline SJP, consistent with university code. We ask for a minimum of one-year suspension for their behavior, if not outright revoking their status as a registered student group.

We look forward to a swift and thorough response by your administration, with appropriate penalties applied. Thank you.

Sincerely,



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