

Letter to Cal Poly SLO President Armstrong

60 Organizations Call for Steps to Address Exclusionary Behavior at Cal Poly

May 3, 2018

Dear President Armstrong,

We are 60 religious, education and civil rights organizations who are deeply concerned about the "[Cal Poly Students' Demands](#)," published last month. Signed by "The Drylongso Collective," which consists of various Cal Poly registered student organizations, the document's demands include the following:

"We want an increase in ASI funding for **ALL** cultural clubs, with the exception of organizations that are aligned with Zionist ideology."

While acknowledging these students' right to express their opinion, we must point out that the demand to exclude students "aligned with Zionist ideology" asks ASI to curtail the allocation of funding to certain groups simply because they do not agree with their opinions. Demanding that **only** Zionist groups be excluded from a request for an increase in student government funding is both hateful and discriminatory, and its implementation at a state university would be a violation of the legal obligation to allocate funds in a viewpoint neutral way. In addition, the implications of this statement for the safety and well-being of Jewish and pro-Israel students on your campus are highly troubling.

The anti-Zionist sentiment that lies at the heart of these student group's statement grows out of an ideology whose primary goal on campus is the suppression of any and all pro-Israel expression. On many college campuses, anti-Zionist sentiment translates into actions that target Jewish and pro-Israel students for harm, including the shutting down or disrupting of pro-Israel events; the vilification and harassment of Jewish and pro-Israel students in order to delegitimize their Zionist perspective or cause them to be too afraid or uncomfortable to express it; and the malevolent manipulation of student government procedure in order to eliminate pro-Israel voices. Studies [demonstrate](#) that on campuses where anti-Zionist activity is found, Jewish and pro-Israel students are about three times more likely to be targeted for harm. At schools with active anti-Zionist student groups, these acts of aggression are seven to eight times more likely to occur.

And this is exactly what we are seeing at Cal Poly SLO. Many Cal Poly Jewish students are reporting feeling frightened, concerned and deeply troubled by this exclusionary behavior. Without intervention on behalf of the university, we fear the situation may continue to escalate as it has in the past at other schools.

We therefore urge you to take the following steps to ensure that ALL students at Cal Poly — including students who identify as Zionists because of their religious belief, ethnic identity, national origin, or political persuasion — are free to express their opinions, beliefs and identities and to fully participate in campus life, now and in the future:

1. Review, update and diligently enforce campus policies and procedures to guarantee that all members of the campus community, irrespective of their opinions, beliefs or identity, are equitably and adequately

protected from intolerant behavior that infringes on their freedom of expression and denies them equal rights.

2. Ensure that prompt and appropriate disciplinary measures are taken when any individual or group engages in behavior that suppresses the freedom of expression or civil rights of others.
3. Develop protocols for vetting the establishment and yearly renewal of university-approved student groups, to determine whether a specific campus group has engaged in the unlawful suppression of others' freedom of speech or civil rights. Any whose members have repeatedly engaged in such behavior should be appropriately disciplined as per school procedures should the group fail to modify conduct that intentionally harms others on campus.
4. Develop educational and training programs to:
 - Help members of the campus community recognize and avoid intolerant behavior that suppresses others' freedom of expression or denies them equal rights, and be aware of all campus policies and procedures regarding such behavior; and
 - Teach and encourage the expression of a wide range of views in a productive and respectful manner.
5. While the above recommendations describe long-term and on-going efforts, one important step that can be implemented immediately is to issue a campus-wide statement assuring all students that they will be equally protected from peer-on-peer harassment that violates their rights to freedom of expression and full participation in campus life. To be effective, the statement should include a description of all University policies and state and federal laws that prohibit harassment and discrimination, along with a firm commitment to their equitable enforcement for all students, regardless of identity, opinion or legally protected status.

Thank you for your leadership and defense of the freedoms and rights of all Cal Poly students.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned 60 Organizations:

Academic Council for Israel
Accuracy in Academia
Aggies for Israel
Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi)
Alums for Campus Fairness – National
Alums for Campus Fairness – UC Davis
Alums for Campus Fairness – UCLA
Alums for Campus Fairness – UC Riverside
AMCHA Initiative
American Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists
American Council of Trustees and Alumni
American Institute for Jewish Research
American Jewish International Relations Institute
American Truth Project
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources
Boston Israel Action Committee
Campus Anti-Semitism Task Force of the North Shore
Christians and Jews United for Israel
Christians United for Israel Action Fund
Club Z

Coalition for Jewish Values
Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA)
Communities for Israel
Davis Faculty for Israel
Eagles Wings
Hasbara Fellowships
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization
Israel-American Coalition for Action
Israel Matters
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)
Jerusalem U
Jewish Israel Cafe
Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa (JIMENA)
Middle East Forum
Middle East Political and Information Network (MEPIN)
National Council of Young Israel
NH4Israel
NCSY
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel
Roc4Israel
Russian Jewish Community Foundation
Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Simon Wiesenthal Center
StandWithUs
Stop BDS on Campus
Students and Parents Against Campus Anti-Semitism
Students Supporting Israel National
Students Supporting Israel at Columbia
Students Supporting Israel at UCLA
Students Supporting Israel at UC Irvine
Students Supporting Israel at UC Santa Barbara
The Israel Christian Nexus
The Israel Group
Training and Education About the Middle East (T.E.A.M.)
Zionist Organization of America
ZOA's Fuel for Truth

Cc:

California State University President Timothy White
California State University Board of Trustees
Cal Poly Associate Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students Kathleen McMahon
California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson
Senator Benjamin Allen, Chair California Senate Standing Committee on Education
Assembly Member Jose Medina, Chair California Assembly Higher Education Committee
Assembly Member Shirley Weber, Chair Assembly Select Committee on Campus Climate
Assembly Member Mark Levine, Chair Jewish Legislative Caucus