

Letter to UC Irvine Chancellor Gillman

61 Groups Call for Equal Protection for All Students at UC Irvine

May 15, 2018

Dear Chancellor Gillman,

We are 61 education and civil rights organizations who are writing to express our concern about yet another pre-meditated disruption of a pro-Israel event on your campus, and to offer a recommendation for addressing the problem in a way that we believe will benefit all students on your campus.

Over a week ago, an Israel-related event hosted by the College Republicans was disrupted by several anti-Israel protesters, including one with a bullhorn, who screamed anti-Zionist chants so loudly that the event had to be stopped for the duration of the chanting. According to a [recording](#) of the event, although the Dean of Students and at least three police officers were present during the disruption, the screaming was allowed to continue for over three minutes, until protesters were finally escorted from the room. As you know, **this is the third year in a row** that anti-Zionist protesters have attempted to aggressively disrupt and shut down a student-hosted Israel-related event on your campus and suppress other students' free speech rights.

The anti-Zionist sentiment that lies at heart of this exclusionary behavior 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.

We believe that now is the time for your administration to take steps to ensure that pro-Israel students and all UCI students are free to express their opinions, beliefs and identities and to fully participate in campus life.

We commend you for your excellent statement on "Rights of Free Speech and Academic Freedom" and the book you co-authored, *Free Speech on Campus*, which affirm the vital importance of freedom of expression and the University's commitment to promoting and not stifling it. However, **students' freedom of expression cannot be guaranteed unless and until students are secure in the knowledge that they are equally protected from the peer-on-peer harassment that would deprive them of that freedom.** If students feel that school administrators address peer-on-peer harassment subjectively or with a double standard – responding promptly and vigorously when harassment is directed against some students but ignoring or downplaying similar behavior directed at others -- it creates a sense of inequity and increased vulnerability, which in turn can lead to further suppression of students' willingness to freely express themselves.

We therefore urge you 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 identity, opinion or legally protected status.

Thank you for considering our recommendation and for your leadership and defense of the freedoms and rights of all students at UCI.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned 61 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 - Columbia University
Alums for Campus Fairness - New York University
Alums for Campus Fairness - Swarthmore
Alums for Campus Fairness - Syracuse University
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Davis
Alums for Campus Fairness - UC Riverside
Alums for Campus Fairness - UCLA
AMCHA Initiative
American Institute for Jewish Research
American Truth Project
Americans for Peace and Tolerance
BEAR: Bias Education, Advocacy & Resources
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
Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET)
Hasbara Fellowships
Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel
Iranian American Jewish Federation
Iranian Jewish Women's Organization
Israel Matters
Israel Peace Initiative (IPI)
Israel-American Coalition for Action
JAM - UCSB
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 Conference on Jewish Affairs
National Council of Young Israel
NCSY
NH4Israel
Proclaiming Justice to the Nations
Rhode Island Coalition for Israel
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 UC Irvine
Students Supporting Israel at UC Santa Barbara
Students Supporting Israel at UCLA
The Israel Christian Nexus
Training and Education About the Middle East (T.E.A.M.)
Zionist Organization of America
ZOA's Fuel for Truth

Cc: UC President Janet Napolitano
UC Regents
Michael R. Arias, UCI Associate Chancellor and Chief of Staff
Dr. Thomas A. Parham, UCI Vice Chancellor Student Affairs
Edgar Dormitorio, UCI Chief of Staff Student Affairs
Dr. Douglas Haynes, UCI Vice Provost Academic Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Rameen Talesh, UCI Dean of Students and Assistant Vice Chancellor Student Life and Leadership
Kirsten K. Quanbeck, UCI Associate Chancellor for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
Crystal Rae Lugo-Shearer, UCI Director Office of Student Conduct
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