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Anti-Zionist Advocacy and Activism of the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Department at University of California Santa Cruz

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Introduction

In likely violation of University of California (UC) policy and state law, faculty members in UC Santa Cruz's Critical Race and Ethnic Studies (CRES) department have been using their departmental status and the University's name and resources to promote political propaganda and activism that breach the most basic standards of scholarship, coerce the consciences of their students and fellow faculty, and incite harm toward members of the UCSC community, especially Jews.

Presented below is extensive evidence of CRES's apparent misconduct, taken from their own statements, classes, and departmentally sponsored events. The evidence shows CRES has committed itself, as a department and as a core element of their discipline, to anti-Zionist political advocacy and activism to undermine and ultimately dismantle the Jewish state, and in so doing, has engaged in behavior that we believe violates a number of University policies and state laws. (See appendices for lists of UC policies and state laws that CRES faculty are likely violating, along with related communications from UC Presidents).

While the evidence we document dates back to May 2021, when CRES pledged departmental allegiance to "the struggle for Palestinian liberation" and the academic boycott of Israel, incidents involving CRES's anti-Zionist political advocacy and activism have increased in frequency and intensity since the October 7, 2023 terrorist attack on Israel, and

have included: blaming Israel for the Hamas massacre and calling Israel's defensive measures a "genocide"; incorporating anti-Zionist propaganda, including clear falsehoods, into their teaching and teacher training programs; shutting down their department as part of a "Global General Strike" against Israel and calling for students to boycott their classes; and promoting and participating in the "Shut It Down for Palestine" protest rally of Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), that illegally blocked access to the campus and threatened the safety of campus members. Furthermore, as shown below, even after a clear warning from the UCSC Provost highlighting UC policies proscribing political advocacy and activism "in the classroom and other instructional spaces," CRES faculty have doubled-down on their political activities, recently announcing on their departmental website the launch of a group, Faculty for Justice in Palestine, wholly devoted to anti-Zionist advocacy and activism in collaboration with SJP.

CRES's explicit political advocacy and activism at the departmental level not only likely violate UC policy and state law, they underscore why such policies and laws are essential at the University of California.

The politicization of CRES's academic programming, including the substitution of one-sided political propaganda and falsehoods for objective, accurate and thorough analyses of a complex topic of global importance, degrades the quality of teaching and corrupts the academic mission of the university. One-sided partisan teaching also limits the access of students to vital information and violates their fundamental right to be educated and not indoctrinated.

Moreover, at a moment when many campuses, including at the University of California, are seeing an explosion of anti-Zionist-motivated antisemitic activity—including physical assault, death threats, intimidation, vandalism and bullying on an unprecedented scale—CRES's commitment to advocacy and activism whose goal is to demonize, delegitimize and dismantle the Jewish state constitutes clear incitement to the further harming of Jewish students.

It's important to note that CRES also plays a key role in bringing their highly politicized and bigoted version of ethnic studies to K-12 classrooms. Last year CRES became the first UCSC department outside the STEM fields to include a "4+1" pathway for students to earn a post-BA teaching credential.

Evidence of CRES's Misconduct

We list below in chronological order evidence documenting the anti-Zionist advocacy and activism carried out by CRES over the last two years:

1. In May 2021, CRES, as an official UCSC department, issued a virulently anti-Israel [statement](#)¹ that explicitly positioned their department as politically motivated and directed, identifying themselves as “activists committed to anti-colonial, anti-racist, feminist, and queer organizing” who “refuse to use objective language that would render us silent as Palestinians continue to experience on ongoing Nakba.” The statement also pledged departmental allegiance to “the struggle for Palestinian liberation,” as well as endorsed an open letter committing faculty to bringing the academic boycott of Israel (the academic arm of the antisemitic BDS movement) onto their campus and into their classrooms.
2. Beginning in July 2023, CRES leaders helped to organize and promote, and possibly contributed departmental funds, to establishing the Institute for the Critical Study of Zionism (ICSZ), whose founding [mission](#) identifies Zionism as “a settler colonial ra-

¹ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

cial project” linked to “group supremacy,” “ethnic cleansing,” and “racism,” and urges “join[ing] in resistance” against Zionist repression. CRES sponsored the ICSZ’s inaugural [conference](#), which restricted participation, and presumably conference sponsorship, to only those scholars, activists, and groups committed to the ICSZ’s founding mission.

3. On October 11, CRES, as an official UCSC department, issued a [statement](#)² that justified Hamas’ October 7th massacre, rape, torture, kidnapping and maiming of thousands of Jews, claiming that Israel was wholly to blame because of “75 years of settler colonial displacement”.
4. Prior to October 20th, CRES posted to their departmental website a [statement](#)³ entitled “Call for a Global General Strike,” which began: “**As a department, we are observing the Palestinian-led Global General Strike and will not conduct university business on 10/20/23.** We are in full support of the strike to stand against Israel’s genocidal attack on Gaza”. The statement also included an announcement from the strike’s organizers, who claimed, “This is a call for civil disobedience,” and called on “all workers and students” to “take Friday off to participate in the general strike.”
5. On October 24th, CRES hosted and promoted on its departmental homepage an event entitled “The Genocide in Gaza in our Classrooms: A Teaching Palestine Workshop,” whose linked [advertisement](#)⁴ stated, “This teach-in is open to all, but will be geared toward those teaching and TA’ing this quarter. We will contextualize the unfolding genocide on Gaza and offer resources for facilitating these discussions in your classrooms.”

At the event itself, several CRES faculty members provided an extremely one-sided version of events in which Hamas’ atrocities against Israeli citizens were not mentioned even once, and Israel’s attempts to defend itself were called “genocide.” In addition, a number of speakers (all CRES professors) stated as fact, or strongly implied, that Israel had bombed a hospital in Gaza and massacred “800 Palestinians.”

It’s inconceivable that these professors were unaware that by October 24th, almost all mainstream news outlets, as well as [US](#) and [UK](#) intelligence services, had concluded that the incident in question was caused by an errant rocket fired by the Islamic Jihad group, that hit the hospital parking lot and caused significantly fewer casualties and far less damage than what was initially reported by the Hamas-controlled government. Nevertheless, not one of the speakers even mentioned that there was contradictory evidence suggesting that perhaps Israel was not to blame for what had happened at the hospital, but simply repeated Hamas-aligned propaganda intended to incite rage and justify anti-Israel violence.

² If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

³ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

⁴ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

6. As of November 7th, CRES has prominently featured on its [homepage](#)⁵ a large banner entitled “Call for Academic Institutions to End Genocide against Palestinians,” which states: “We, the CRES faculty, call on everyone—including scholars, researchers, organizers and administrators worldwide—to act now to end Israel’s genocidal attack on Gaza.” The banner includes an inflammatory drawing of a group of faceless Palestinians with raised fists standing on the outline of the Jewish state, with a large hand ripping apart strands of barbed wire running atop the Jewish state. The banner also links to another CRES [webpage](#)⁶, which showcases the following three statements:
- a. An [Open Letter](#)⁷ from the ICSZ’s “Research Community,” of which CRES is a part. Dated 10/17/23, the letter does not mention Hamas or its 10/7/23 genocidal attack on Israel, but instead claims that “the root cause of the brutal violence we are witnessing is Israel’s 75-year regime of settler-colonialism and apartheid” and calls on scholars, researchers, organizers and administrators worldwide “to end Israel’s genocidal attack on Gaza.” The letter also demands that university administrators end “academic complicity in Israel’s apartheid regime,” and it affirms the group’s commitment to “supporting the Palestinian-led campaign to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel.” The letter ends with the group’s calls for “a complete and total end to Israel’s apartheid regime” and the “right of return for those in exile,” which is effectively calling for an end to the Jewish state.
 - b. An [Open Letter](#)⁸ from Birzeit University in Palestine to International Academic Institutions, dated 10/15/23, which does not mention Hamas or its 10/7/23 genocidal attack on Israel, but instead accuses Israel of “genocide” and “apartheid,” urges “international academic institutions to take concrete action... to end Israeli settler colonialism,” and calls for the boycott of all Israeli academic institutions.
 - c. A [letter](#)⁹ from the UC Ethnic Studies Faculty Council, which CRES faculty helped to establish and lead, sent to the UC Regents, President and Chancellors, vilifying these UC leaders for issuing statements condemning Hamas’ slaughter of Israeli civilians and demanding that UC’s administrative leadership “retract charges of terrorism” against Hamas, as well as “to uplift the Palestinian freedom struggle, and to stand against Israel’s war crimes against the ethnic cleansing and genocide of the Palestinian people.” The letter also condemns these leaders for their opposition to BDS, with the Faculty Council claiming BDS “should be celebrated,” not opposed.

⁵ Screenshot from 12/7/23.

⁶ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

⁷ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

⁸ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

⁹ If the link is broken, see 11/29/23 [screenshot](#).

7. CRES [advertised](#)¹⁰ on its departmental homepage an event on November 9th organized by Students for Justice in Palestine at UCSC. Entitled “Shut It Down for Palestine,” the event’s [advertisement](#)¹¹ stated, “Skip school and work, do not look away from the genocide,” and [encouraged](#) students instead to attend a protest at the base of campus and to “wear a face mask or keffiyeh” in order to hide their identity. In addition, on the CRES [News](#)¹² page, an announcement for the SJP protest makes it clear the department will once again be shutting down its operations, canceling classes, and encouraging students to skip classes as well, stating, **“The department will be observing November 9 all-day sit-in at the base of campus. Skip school and work. Do not look away from the genocide. No business as usual!”**

According to a community [announcement](#) sent out from the UCSC Chancellor’s office on November 13th, the protest itself involved unlawful behavior, including “blocking the main entrance of our campus for hours, preventing ingress and egress, closing the intersection, and creating unsafe situations where drivers were waved into the intersection by protestors and then surrounded.” The SJP-organized, CRES-promoted and attended event impeded, and in some cases shut down, campus operations for many hours, making it difficult or impossible for members of the campus community to get to classes, meals, healthcare, and childcare.

8. **In clear defiance of the UCSC Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor’s** November 13th [message](#) to the UCSC Instructional Community warning about the potential UC policy violations involved with engaging in political advocacy “in the classroom and other instructional spaces,” on November 17th CRES posted to its departmental homepage an announcement of the establishment of a UCSC chapter of Faculty for Justice in Palestine (FJP), an organization purely devoted to anti-Zionist political advocacy and activism.

The message on the CRES [homepage](#)¹³ stated, “Amidst the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and the efforts across campuses to silence speech about Palestine, we, the undersigned, have formed a Faculty for Justice in Palestine (FJP) group at UCSC...we look forward to organizing joint events and actions with other FJP groups across the Bay Area, California, and the country.”

The CRES homepage announcement provides a [link](#)¹⁴ to their “statement and invitation” to join the new FJP group’s work, which includes a commitment to advocacy and activism efforts “until liberation of Palestinian land and people is actualized and the

¹⁰ Screenshot from 11/8/23.

¹¹ If the link is broken, see 11/8/23 [screenshot](#).

¹² If the link is broken, see 12/7/23 [screenshot](#).

¹³ Screenshot from 11/19/23.

¹⁴ If the link is broken, see 12/7/23 [screenshot](#).

right of return is implemented". (Both the "liberation of Palestinian land" and the "right of return" of several million Palestinians to what is now the sovereign state of Israel are well-known phrases alluding to efforts to dismantle the Jewish state).

The statement also commits UCSC faculty to "supporting Students for Justice in Palestine [SJP] in their work [and] collaborating with students on direct action." (SJP is the group whose Shut It Down for Palestine rally the prior week had illegally disrupted access to the UCSC campus and endangered the safety of campus members, and whose previous [statements](#)¹⁵ and [protests](#) on campus after October 7th condoned Hamas' massacre of Israeli civilians and called for "total liberation of Palestine by any means necessary").

More than 60% of the principal CRES [faculty](#), including the current and former department chairs, are signatories of the FJP statement and have publicly identified themselves as founders of UCSC's FJP chapter.

It is important to point out that the CRES posting was responsive to a recent call [issued](#) by the US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI) for faculty to form FJP groups on campuses "in order to support NSJP [National Students for Justice in Palestine]...and engage in Palestine solidarity work generally." The USACBI call adds, "As advocates for the BDS movement, we ask that founding members [of FJP chapters] make a commitment to the founding principles of USACBI," which include support for implementing an academic boycott of Israel on their campuses.

This extensive list provides evidence of departmental misconduct that warrants investigation by UC and state officials to determine if any of the above behavior is a violation of UC policies or state laws, including those found in Appendix I below.

¹⁵ If the link is broken, see 10/17/23 [screenshot](#).

Appendices Summary

Appendix I lists UC policies and state laws that CRES faculty are likely violating. These include prohibitions on using the name, facilities or resources of the University for political advocacy; using instructional spaces for political indoctrination; and failure to meet the contractual and fiduciary obligations incumbent upon individual faculty and academic departments.

Appendix II contains excerpts from a directive written by UC President Clark Kerr in 1961 and a memo and letter written by UC President Charles J. Hitch in 1970, which provide insight into the applicability of UC policy and state law to the behavior of CRES faculty.

Appendix III contains relevant correspondence between the UC Office of the President, UC Chancellors and the non-profit organization AMCHA Initiative, in which these UC leaders affirm the prohibited nature of certain kinds of political advocacy and activism involving BDS promotion and implementation, carried out by UC graduate student instructors and faculty.

Appendix I

University of California Policy and California State Law which may have been Violated by CRES Faculty

UC Policies

- **Regents Policy on Course Content, approved June 1970¹⁶:** “They (The Regents) are responsible to ensure that public confidence in the University is justified. And they are responsible to see that the University remain aloof from politics and never function as an instrument for the advance of partisan interest. **Misuse of the classroom by, for example, allowing it to be used for political indoctrination...constitutes misuse of the University as an institution.**”
- **Restrictions on the Use of University Resources and Facilities for Political Activities, approved September 1970¹⁷:** “The name, insignia, seal, or address of the University or any of its offices or units **shall not be used for or in connection with political purposes or activity.**”
- **Academic Personnel Policy (APM) 015 – Faculty Code of Conduct¹⁸:** “A. Teaching and Students...Types of unacceptable conduct: 1. **Failure to meet the responsibilities of instruction**, including...(c) significant failure to adhere, without legitimate reason, to the rules of the faculty in the conduct of courses, **to meet class...as scheduled...** C. The University... Types of unacceptable conduct: 1. **Intentional disruption of functions** or activities sponsored or authorized by the University. 2. **Incitement of others to disobey University rules** when such incitement constitutes a clear and present danger that...the University’s central functions will be significantly impaired. 3. **Unauthorized use of University resources or facilities** on a significant scale **for personal, commercial, political, or religious purposes.**”

California Laws

- **Article IX, Section 9, of the California Constitution¹⁹** provides that the University of California “shall be entirely independent of all political or sectarian influence.”
- **California Education Code Section 92000²⁰** prohibits the use of the name of any UC campus for the support, endorsement, or **advancement of “any political...movement, activity or program,”** with “**boycott**” specifically named.

¹⁶ <https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/2301.html>

¹⁷ <https://policy.ucop.edu/doc/1200368/FacilPolitActiv>

¹⁸ https://www.ucop.edu/academic-personnel-programs/_files/apm/apm-015.pdf

¹⁹ <https://law.justia.com/constitution/california/article-ix/section-9/>

²⁰ https://california.public.law/codes/ca_educ_code_section_92000

Appendix II

Writings from Former UC Presidents Clark Kerr and Charles J. Hitch Providing Insight into Applicability of UC Policy and State Law to Behavior of CRES Faculty

- **Directive of UC President Clark Kerr,²¹ dated September 1961, interpretive of Article IX, Section 9 of the California Constitution (see above):**

“University facilities and the name of the University must not be used in ways which will involve the University as an institution in the political, religious, and other controversial issues of the day”

- **Excerpt from a May 1970 letter by UC President Charles J. Hitch to all UC faculty justifying the need for the Regents Policy on Course Content and Restrictions on the Use of University Resources and Facilities for Political Activities (see above):**

“These [actions taken by the California Legislature to deny salary increases for UC faculty] are matters of very grave significance for the future of the University, and I want you to know that I share your feelings of shock and dismay...You should know, however, that these legislative actions reflect widespread public antagonism and complaint about recent events on the campuses [i.e. anti-Viet Nam War activism] ... Many legislators believe that the basic academic purposes of our campuses are being distorted and subverted, that academic credit is being given for work that is not appropriate, and that the atmosphere of the campuses has become politicized, with freedom only for some views and not for others...

“...[W]e have a duty to maintain the educational integrity of the institution. Specifically...University facilities, supplies, equipment and other resources must not be diverted to partisan political use... [and the] University, as an institution, must not become an instrument of political action.

“I want to emphasize that public concern about developments in the University is not merely an expression of those who traditionally have been our critics. Questions are being raised on all sides, and it is up to the faculty and the administration to have sound answers. The Academic Senate is vital to the effective governance of **the University. At this time, the faculty – individually and through the Senate – has a direct responsibility for helping to defend the educational integrity of the institution and for enforcing professional standards of academic behavior. This is the only way in which we can regain the confidence of those on whom our support depends!**”

²¹ content.cdlib.org/xtf/view?docId=kt900015wg&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00028&toc.id=0&brand=calisphere

- **Excerpt from a memo from UC President Charles J. Hitch to members of the Committee on Educational Policy dated September 11, 1970:**

“As I stated in my July report on ‘Plan for Maintaining the Integrity of the University and its Academic Programs,’ the use of University facilities and resources is very much connected with the integrity of the University. The events of the last several months highlight the problem of balancing the rights of political expression, advocacy, and activity with the responsibility of assuring that University facilities and resources are not used for unjustifiable purposes.

“There are both educational and legal reasons why the University must remain politically neutral. Educationally, the pursuit of truth and knowledge is only possible in an atmosphere of freedom, and if the University were to surrender its neutrality, it would jeopardize its freedom. Legally, Article IX, section 9, of the State Constitution provides in part that ‘The University shall be entirely independent of all political or sectarian influence and kept free therefrom in the appointment of its regents and in the administration of its affairs...’”

Appendix III

Relevant Correspondence Between UC Officials and AMCHA Initiative

- In a [letter](#) dated 9/8/14 from UC Provost Aimee Dorr in response to a request for assurances that the Regents Policy on Course Content would be enforced to prevent academic student employees (ASEs) from promoting BDS in their classrooms, Provost Dorr wrote: **“The University’s position as to the conduct of ASEs in the classroom is rooted in its academic policies, including the UC Regents Policy on Course Content, referenced in your letter. We will ask the campuses to remind all ASEs about these policies and their obligation to adhere to them.”**
- A [letter](#) dated 9/8/14 from UC Provost Aimee Dorr to all UC Chancellors, apprising them of public concerns about ASEs promoting BDS in their classrooms, and reminding them of the academic policies which form the basis of the University’s position about the conduct of ASEs, included: Regents Policy 2301, Policy on Course Conduct; APM-010, Academic Freedom, Appendix B, Statement of Principles: Student Freedom of Scholarly Activity; and APM-015: The Faculty Code of Conduct.

- In a [letter](#) dated 12/19/14 from UC Provost Aimee Dorr in response to a query about whether the Regents Policy on Course Content prohibits not only ASEs from using their classrooms to promote BDS, but UC faculty members as well, Provost Dorr replied: “In response to your question, **the Regents Policy on Course Content does apply to UC faculty members.**”
- In a [letter](#) dated 12/11/18 from UC Irvine Chancellor Gillman in response to a request for him to acknowledge that implementation of an academic boycott of Israel would harm his campus’ own students and faculty, Chancellor Gillman sent a statement signed by **all ten UC Chancellors that affirmed their “long-standing opposition” to the academic boycott of Israel, and acknowledged that such a boycott “poses a direct and serious threat to the academic freedom of our students and faculty”.**