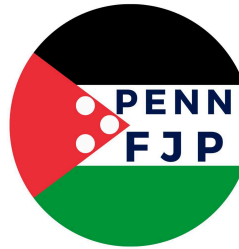


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**PENN FACULTY FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE OBJECTS TO THE INTERIM  
PRESIDENT'S THREATS TO ARREST STUDENT PROTESTORS AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**April 27, 2024, Philadelphia, PA.** Penn Faculty for Justice in Palestine (Penn FJP) strongly objects to the way in which administrators at the University of Pennsylvania are handling the student protesters' peaceful and principled Gaza Solidarity Encampment, erected on Thursday, April 25, 2024.

On April 26, 2024, Interim President Larry Jameson issued a morning email to the entire campus community underlining his support for a peaceful protest. In the President's own words:

"Penn has and will continue to support the rights of our community members to protest peacefully and in keeping with University policy. At Penn, we will stand up for free speech and the productive exchange of ideas, even when we disagree."

Later that day, he reversed his pledge to respect students' First Amendment rights as well as the University Open Expression Guidelines that permit peaceful demonstrations outside designated indoor areas, calling instead for the immediate dispersal of the encampment. This is a dangerous escalation on the part of the University, and unacceptable. We attach a redacted version of the letter Penn FJP wrote in response to the letter issued by the President and University administration.

We note that the University consistently misinterprets and misapplies Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which protects students from discrimination based on race or

national origin, to quell political protest that is critical of the Israeli state. Per the ACLU [Open Letter to College and University Presidents on Student Protests](#) (April 26, 2024), “Speech that is *not* targeted at an individual or individuals because of their ethnicity or national origin but merely expresses impassioned views about Israel or Palestine is not discrimination and should be protected.”

Professors and staff who are members of Penn FJP are fully able to testify that the encampment is a remarkably disciplined and principled gathering of student protestors. One medical faculty member of Penn FJP attests, “As nursing faculty, I support the solidarity encampment because I see students learning to care, heal, and advocate in ways beyond what can be taught in a lab or classroom. I see them identifying needs and meeting them, looking beyond their own periphery in recognizing suffering, and rightly calling out injustice.”

According to Assistant Professor Sukaina Hirji, “I was at the encampment for the first thirty six hours and I witnessed students de-escalate interactions with counter-protestors and hecklers; reinforce their community guidelines that prohibit any harassment or hate speech; and stand guard while hundreds of Muslim and Jewish students prayed together. The students are doing everything imaginable to model peaceful protest, and the administration should be protecting and supporting their efforts rather than escalating ”

Professor Karen Redrobe attests, “I support the encampment because the students are exercising their right to protest peacefully the war crimes happening in Gaza, and to voice their consciences and their aspirations for a better university. This diverse group of students has been ruthlessly insulted, suppressed, erased, and ignored in their grief by Penn to my great shame. As a teacher by vocation – who believes that hope and love are the foundation of all inclusive pedagogies – I am ashamed of Penn’s response to this terrible war, and I stand by these, and indeed all our students’ right to question, dialogue, learn, protest, think, and care about the world.”

Professor Ericka Beckman writes, “I support the student encampment at Penn as a means of exercising solidarity with the Palestinian people. Amid nation-wide crackdowns on academic freedom by donors, politicians and administrators, this is the only way students —the heart and soul of any university worth the name—can be heard right now.”

The Interim President’s latest decision follows from the sad fact that over the past six months, the University seems to care principally about the fears of Zionist students and faculty on Penn’s campus. When pro-Palestinian community members, *including*

*Jewish faculty and students who are critical of the Israeli government*, are harassed—as has been the case repeatedly—their concerns have been ignored.

Lastly, it is worth noting that the email the Interim President sent on April 25, 2024 was a rare instance—only the second time a senior administrator has used the word “Palestine” after nearly seven months of the ongoing war in Gaza and the continued harassment of Palestinian students and faculty. This silence and omission, needless to say, has compounded the harm experienced by our Palestinian students, colleagues, and their allies.